

A. LEARNING TO COMMUNICATE IN ENGLISH

Conference notes with concern that:

- A. England does not have a strategy for the teaching of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), unlike Scotland and Wales;
- B. According to the 2011 Census, at least 726,000 people in the UK do not speak English 'well', and this is likely to be an underestimate;
- C. Government funding for ESOL has been cut by 60% in real terms between 2009/10 and 2015/16, whilst additional funding for job seekers and ring-fenced funding for community education have both been removed;
- D. Consequently, enrolment in state-funded ESOL classes has fallen by 43% over the same period.

Conference believes that:

- 1) In order to champion the freedom of individuals and enable them to contribute to their communities, the Government and devolved administrations must have a crucial role in funding ESOL provision;
- 2) Funding for ESOL classes should be allocated with transparency and based on robust evidence.

Conference calls on the Government to:

- 1. Establish a national ESOL strategy for England that will include recommendations to improve collaboration between local ESOL providers and to create a national ESOL champion;
- 2. Require every local education authority to publish a 'Language Needs Assessment' that must identify the need for ESOL provision in the authority's area, identify target groups and outline how it intends to address this need, and provide the necessary funding to allow them to carry this out;
- 3. Require local authorities to maintain an 'ESOL hub' website with information about how to access learning opportunities;
- 4. Incentivise employers to contribute towards the cost of ESOL classes for their employees;
- 5. Work on a cross-party basis and with awarding organisations and ESOL providers to modernise the ESOL Qualifications and Curriculum Framework;
- 6. Create 'fast-track' pathways for ESOL learners into employment by promoting partnerships between adult education colleges and businesses in need of language skills, such as export firms.