

ESOL for Pregnancy and ESOL with Infants

Delivered by Shipley College from November 2016 – June 2024

ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) for Pregnancy is an embedded English course which helps women develop their language skills to help them improve their confidence in communicating with midwives, doctors and other healthcare professionals. It helps them prepare for the birth of their baby and make decisions about their birth plan. It is a targeted intervention aimed at women who would require an interpreter for antenatal appointments and for the birth of their baby.

ESOL with Infants is a follow-on project which helps parents/carers develop their language skills through sharing books (in English and in their mother tongue) with their children in a play and learn setting, based on interaction with their child. The project also makes them aware of progression routes for further ESOL provision. It is aimed at parents/carers of children aged under 2 who will usually require interpreter support when engaging with services.

How it was delivered

ESOL for Pregnancy ran over 5-7 weeks, for 2 hours per week, with a maximum of 8 learners. The course was tailored for each learner's ability, level of English and stage of pregnancy. Initially delivered face-to-face, the course swapped to online delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic. Recruitment and retention increased for the online offer, and this was retained as the delivery model post-COVID.

ESOL with Infants consisted of 6 x 2 hour-long sessions run on a weekly basis in a play-based setting. Books were gifted to participants each week so that they could continue to use them at home.

28%
of referred women had no understanding of English at the time of referral

Referred women spoke
31
home languages



Why this project was developed

The project was developed by Shipley College with funding from the NHS, and the Better Start Bradford model was designed in collaboration with the college.

We knew from routine data that women in the Better Start Bradford area were more likely to present late to midwifery services and that take up of antenatal classes was poor.

We also knew that women who do not have good proficiency in English are more likely to experience poorer health outcomes experiencing more anxiety and stress and poorer birth outcomes.

Research suggests that empowering women to communicate better with midwives and doctors, to engage with key health messages, understand local systems and practices and interact better with their children is a significant protective factor both for themselves and for their child.

The project aimed to:

- Increase women's confidence in communicating with healthcare professionals
- Increase language and communication skills
- Increase confidence in talking to their child using the books provided
- Increase awareness and take-up of ESOL progression routes
- Increase social interaction
- Increase parent-child interaction in any language

Impact and findings*

- The project was on a much smaller scale than other projects in the Better Start Bradford programme. The aim of the project has always been to make a difference in and to families' lives. As a result of this, much of the findings are based on participant's stories.
- Participants have said this project has made them feel less isolated due to feeling more confident speaking English.
- One of the participants now runs her own stay and learn sessions for babies and toddlers.
- Some participants have completed additional accredited courses for ESOL and even been able to learn to drive.
- The tutor ran a course in a women's refuge and made such good connections with the families there she managed to initiate a day out to the seaside for them with the refuge staff.
- Both ESOL for Pregnancy and ESOL with Infants provided families with language-rich activities that can benefit the child, such as reading books, storytelling, singing, and rhymes. This is something families can continue with subsequent children.

*This section includes information from both the evaluation report/s and project

