

English at Home Lottery Report 2024



“The English at Home Project is a fantastic resource to tackle English barriers amongst our refugee women who are most marginalised. Refugee women who are unable to attend ESOL classes in person at college due to health and wellbeing issues, being pregnant or looking after small babies often feel stressed, isolated and sad but when they get matched up with someone through the English at Home Project who can support them through their barriers and obstacles, it helps to lift their spirits up again!” - **Abbas Mohammed, Resettlement Support Officer, Leeds City Council**

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What is English at Home and why is it needed?

LASSN's English at Home Project is designed to remove the barriers to learning English for refugees and asylum seekers who are unable to attend mainstream education and classes. Issues around childcare and physical or mental health are the main reasons for referrals to the project, so bringing a volunteer teacher to the learner's home and providing one-to-one tuition makes it possible for people who may otherwise be very isolated and unable to progress with their English learning to flourish instead.

Referrals can come from organizations, family, friends or the individual themselves. We can match anyone as long as the person lives in Leeds, is a refugee or asylum seeker with English at Entry 3 or lower and there is a reason they are unable to attend classes. The client sets their own learning goals with lessons tailored to meeting these. They can range from being able to use public transport to confidently to visiting the GP without an interpreter or even passing a driving test!

How many people were supported?



What did learners achieve?



**Started
Work or
Volunteerin
g**

The Learner Experience



'My English teacher gives me more confidence and help me about speaking outside the home in English. I can make an appointment at the GP'

You can hear more about Khalida's* experience of English at Home on [this video](#).

"I am so, so happy with my teacher, he makes me feel so comfortable and I am not scared to try now. I wish he could come every day. Thank you so much for finding me a teacher" **Goli, English at Home learner**

Language Skills and Confidence

'All is going well with Sahra. It's such a pleasure and so rewarding to see how her confidence has grown and her how command of English has greatly improved. All her hard work is beginning to pay off. I see an improvement every week.'* **Lucy, English at Home teacher**

'Before, in my country, I could not learn anything. Now with my teacher, I have learned so much. I do not forget any of it! I know 'ing', was, things in the past, I will, so many things I will never forget!' **Marziyeh, English at Home learner**

"She is so different now. Even when she speaks to me in Kurdish her face is different and happier. English has been the key to unlocking her future.' **An interpreter speaking about Salah*, a learner she has met numerous times**

Many people referred to English at Home have very basic, if any, English and quite a few are also illiterate in their home language. This is often compounded by immense trauma, missing family, being in a new culture and often in very stressful situations leading to a real lack of confidence. Due to this, we are delighted to see all 96 learners said they felt more confident after having English at Home lessons. This could be shown by increasing interaction at the school gates, being willing to ask for help in a shop or writing their name for the first time on a form.

Dina*, a mother of 2 children with severe blood disorders, told us how she had to spend weeks at a time in hospital. She started as a beginner, but after 6 months can now attend the

hospital visits without an interpreter, stating it gives her more control over decision making and more confidence to ask questions and consider medical advice.

We can also see that 100% of learners' English has improved since having a teacher, even if they have only met for a short period of time. As the sessions are bespoke and delivered one on one, it means the lesson can completely focus on the learner's needs and goals, with these ranging hugely due to the wide variety of learners' backgrounds. They have ranged from wanting to know the names of fruit and vegetables to learning the parts of a car and passing the B1 exam or learning how to use PowerPoint. It means that everything learnt is relevant to them and they can progress at their own pace.

An example of the benefit of the individualised learning is highlighted through Joanne*. Due to trauma she lost her ability and confidence to read. We were able to match her with a volunteer who has a psychotherapy background. By being able to identify the learner's triggers and reduce the stress that facing the written word brings, the volunteer has begun the process literally word by word of bringing back the joy of reading for this learner.

Moving on to classes



One of the criteria for having an English at Home teacher is not being able to attend classes. However, people's circumstances often change while they are being supported by LASSN, so we work hard to connect learners with Leeds City College or other organisations running classes when appropriate. This year we ran a trip to the Enfield Centre at Leeds City College to give learners considering applying the opportunity to have a tour with a

member of staff, meet current students, ask questions and receive support with their application.

We are also part of the Project Advisory Group for the Migrant English Support Hub who have created and maintain the learningenglish.org.uk website which lists all registered English classes in Leeds in on place. This means we are well informed of suitable classes for English at Home learners that we can direct people to. By developing these connections, as well as with many other class providers, it is brilliant to see that 43 learners have managed to join an ESOL class to continue their learning.

Reduced Isolation

As well as improved language skills and confidence, another key goal of the project is reducing isolation. Last year 40 learners became part of a local community group, and 59 people said that they had managed to make friends in the local area. This can be a huge step, often taking a lot of courage, and it has been wonderful to hear stories of people joining the

local library, attending groups for parents and children, trekking with local walking groups, playing on sports teams, singing in choirs and much more. Other learners have shared stories about making friends with refugees who have just arrived in the area and helping them navigate the local area. Despite the violent disorder over the summer and the anxiety it caused, people have continued to strive to become part of the local community and make it a better place.

Developing New Skills

It is brilliant to see the additional skills to English which learners have been acquiring. Last year, 15 learners were either found work or volunteered, using their skills to help others, with this including charity shops, cafes and supporting people with dementia. Considering that people referred to English at Home find it very difficult to leave their home due to transport, childcare and health issues, it is amazing to see the effort people have been making to help others and to build their own skill set.

This year we have also had a large number of people interested in taking their driving lessons. Due to this we have invested in a number of physical resources to prepare for the theory test and been able to link teachers who have coached learners through the exam to support each other.

Many learners also want to develop their digital skills. We have been able to provide laptops for 7 learners this year, with this technology enabling them to communicate with family back home, access learning material and attend online courses. Some learners have also wanted to learn how to use computer programmes such as Word and Powerpoint for further studies.

'It was brilliant learning and I entered in new world' **Rosa***, English at Home learner after learning IT skills with her teacher to prepare her for University once her children are at school

Signposting and Support

Navigating the asylum system and knowing what other support is available can be extremely difficult, even with good English. Due to this, when we first meet a client we ask what support is needed and find out if they are already in contact with other organisations to provide this, if not we try and connect them with organisations specialising in what they need. We do the same at our 3 and 6 month reviews too.



Jayne*, one of the women we support, was referred to us initially as she was very isolated and wanted to learn English to be able to communicate with others. After just over a year with her tutor she is now in a yoga group, going to ESOL classes, attending a women's group, teaching knitting and sewing to other women and also using her knitting skills to raise money for another charity! By being connected with other organisations we were able to signpost Jayne to suitable groups, then enjoy watching

her flourish!

A safe place and special bond

'I was so worried before I met you and didn't sleep...but you are a wonderful person I love you!'

Faizul, English at Home learner

'My teacher, she is like a sister to me.' **Roshni, English at Home learner**



The one-to-one relationship can create a unique bond with learners often commenting that the teacher feels like a member of the family. This means that strong relationships can be built with friendships often continuing for years, even after LASSN have officially closed the match. The teacher really gets to understand the learners needs so can offer the best support possible.

This unique bond was really important over the summer this year during the riots. Over this time, everyone connected with LASSN was very anxious but many learners said that knowing their teacher was provided comfort emotionally, as well as on a practical level being able to pass on information to help keep them safe.

The Volunteer's Experience

'It gives me the opportunity to use skills in language teaching which I would lose otherwise and it's been brilliant to see the difference those skills can make in someone else's life' **Jake, English at Home volunteer.**



You can hear more about Jake's experience as a volunteer on [this video](#).

'I call it my 'favourite hour of the week' at home 😊. I can't tell you how much I am enjoying it. Safina is so keen and practices each week between lessons.'*

Jean, English at Home Volunteer

Without our amazing team of volunteers we wouldn't be able to do anything! This year we have supported 74 volunteers who have been matched with a learner. Each of these volunteers have been through our detailed compulsory training before beginning.

Core Training



'I just wanted to say thank you for such an excellent session today. It was really informative, well-managed, AND a great lunch. Please pass on my thanks to all your colleagues.' **Feedback after training from a volunteer.**

All volunteers complete core training before being matched. This includes; An introduction to LASSN, The Asylum Journey and Teaching English at Home. Safeguarding is also a focus of both days training sessions.

As a staff team we spend a great deal of time making sure that the training is as up to date and relevant as possible. Prior to the session we had a staff training session with Asylum Matters who briefed us on updates to asylum policy and law. We also reflect on feedback from previous training to make sure the sessions are as useful as possible. In these sessions we also have numerous guest speakers, including a previous LASSN client with lived experience of the asylum system, as well as a current English at Home tutor and learner. This gives the volunteers the opportunity to ask questions and find out more from people with relevant expertise.

Additional Training

As well as the compulsory training, we also want to make sure that teachers are offered the opportunity to build on their skills and knowledge. We have offered numerous training sessions to volunteers run by experts in the field:

Supporting Someone Struggling with their Mental Health – Solace

As many of the people we support face anxiety, depression and/or or PTSD, Solace ran a session for volunteers about boundaries and help to best support someone.

Preparing for the B1 Exam - Trinity College

Due to the number of learners needing to take the B1 exam for Citizenship, Trinity College very kindly led a session on tips on how to prepare for it. A member of Trinity staff is also available to speak with LASSN learners and teachers one-to-one to explain to them the content of the exam and answer any questions they have.

Housing training – Leeds City Council

The number of people we support who have struggled to find accommodation once they have received their refugee status has been rising. To understand the cause of this issue and also how to support someone unable to find accommodation, Leeds City Council ran a session which addressed these points.

Getting the most from the online LASSN teaching resources – LASSN

As we continue to add more online resources to the LASSN website, we wanted to make sure that our volunteers are able to access and make the best use of them. With the assistance of two volunteers who update the website on a weekly basis, we ran a session to explore this and highlighted some of the best resources available.

Skill Shares

As well as expert guest speakers, we also encourage volunteers to share their knowledge with each other, as they are in a specific role and have an excellent array of skills and resources.

Once a volunteer begins with LASSN we invite them to join a Signal group where they can be informed of events and resources and also to ask the group if there is any advice or resources they need.



Every 6-8 weeks we run a Skill Share event. These are very informal and open to all teachers to come and share any resources they have used that might be useful for others. It is also an opportunity to ask for support from the group if there is a situation/learning point that they have found challenging.

As our volunteers all have different commitments we have tried to make the Skill Shares as accessible as possible. We now have a rotation of timings, with the first session in the evening, the next in the day, the third in Otley (we have a high number of volunteers from there and the surrounding area) and then a fourth online for those who find that more accessible. This is then repeated. We hope that having this flexibility means that volunteers are able to access at least one of the sessions and build connections with other volunteers. We have increased the time of the Skill Shares to 90 minutes following feedback from

volunteers. It has been lovely to see volunteers meeting up informally outside these sessions too, sharing ideas and resources.

This year we also had an informal film screening for volunteers to watch The Old Oak film. It provided the opportunity to watch a topical film with relevant themes, then discuss what they had seen in a safe environment, including challenges from family and friends to their volunteering as well as racism they had witnessed and how to challenge it. We aim to continue to offer this to volunteers and show more topical films/programmes next year.

Resources

As the English at Home project offers one to one support, we are able to treat each learner as an individual and to offer tailored support rather than a specific syllabus to follow. Once a learner is matched, we send the teacher a [Resources for your first lessons](#) pack full of tips and useful resources to get started as well as the most useful resources for that specific learners' needs which they have identified themselves.

There is an abundance of ESOL resources available online, some which are of a very high quality, others less so. To make sure that our tutors, and anyone else who would like to use them, is able to access high quality resources, we are continually developing the [Resources Section](#) of the LASSN website. We have two highly skilled and dedicated volunteers who spend two hours each week cataloguing new resources that would be a useful addition to the website through consultation with teachers as to what is needed. This means we are constantly updating what is available and offering excellent resources to equip our tutors. As mentioned, we have also run sessions on how to navigate the teaching resources on the LASSN website as well as creating [this video](#) for tutors.

Emotional Support and Benefits

" Being a volunteer for the English at Home project has been the best thing I have done since I retired. It is so rewarding to give this individually tailored support and watching the learners' confidence grow as their English improves. It's a two-way process though and I am learning so much about other cultures.

I think many of us feel anguish and a helplessness when we hear stories of refugees and asylum seekers experiences. For me this is a way to channel those negative feelings into doing something positive." **Fiona, English at Home volunteer**

'Lessons with Zara are the highlight of my week we have such fun together.'* **Zaneer, English at Home volunteer**

We really aim for volunteers to enjoy teaching with LASSN and for them to get out of volunteering as much as they put in. A cultural exchange often takes place, with volunteers saying they have learnt some words in the learners' home language, discovered new things about the culture and even been taught delicious recipes! In terms of benefits, teachers have also advanced their skills and knowledge on the training sessions we offer as well as being able to receive references from us for employment.

We also acknowledge that at times it is difficult supporting someone in the asylum system, as the learner is very often dealing with a great deal of trauma both from the past and into the present. Due to this we offer support not just to the learner through referrals to professionals such as Solace, but also to tutors who are supporting them. This can be through an informal chat and offer of advice, to offering them sessions with a therapist if they feel the impact of vicarious trauma.

Level 1 Quality Mark in Volunteering

As our volunteers are so important to all that we do at LASSN, we want to recognise the time, skills, experience and joy they bring by supporting them as best possible. For this reason we successfully applied for the Level 1 Quality Mark in Volunteering awarded by Voluntary Action Leeds. To achieve this we submitted a rigorous report about our volunteer policies, procedures and practices and were delighted to receive the following feedback-

‘This is an exceptional submission. Volunteers are clearly valued as an integral part of the service and this is reinforced by the level of support they receive, the expenses offer, the training and induction. All appropriate procedures and systems are in place to effectively recruit and support volunteers.’ Andrina Dawson- Co-Ordinator for Volunteering, Voluntary Action Leeds

Partners

Referral Organisations

At LASSN we recognise that we are part of a network of organisations in Leeds working together with refugees and asylum seekers. Below are a few case studies from organisations who refer to LASSN to state the impact of the project.

'I would like to say that the service you provide is invaluable. If you did not visit people at home, they would not be able to learn English. Mrs I

I first met Mrs I at the Wetherby hotel in April 2023, she'd been in the UK since Sept 2021. I always communicated with her via an interpreter, even though she'd attended ESOL classes in the hotel. When they moved into the community, although she wanted to continue with ESOL, she had recently had a baby. It has only been a few months since she has been seeing a LASSN teacher, yet last week when I visited her, we were able to communicate directly with each other, it was just amazing. I think it made us both very happy.' **Nina Pungi - Community Resettlement Support Officer, Leeds City Council**

'Due to my client having very low-level English skills, she struggles to engage in community or college classes. English at Home provides her ESOL sessions that are accessible and tailored to her specific needs. In addition to this, English at Home provides my client with the opportunity to visit new places and interact with other people – this is invaluable as it reduces feelings of social isolation.' **Emma Heaton - Resident Advocacy Worker, Palm Cove**

'I am writing to express how satisfied/impressed I am with the LASSN English At Home Service. I referred my non-English-speaking Client to the above Service, as they are lonely/isolated/ unable to go out on their own, with low mood/low confidence/poor motivation, but said they wanted to improve their English Language skills, prior to going to College.

The LASSN English at Home Team are visiting the Client in their home, and they will receive free English Lessons, which is phenomenal, and will, hopefully, in time, help to build the Client's confidence, and motivation, for social interactions, in the Community, and reduce their isolation.

LASSN said they will also take the Client, when ready, to visit a local College.

Although my Service is drawing to a close, I am happy to see that the Client asks me to write any correspondence, in English now, rather than in their native tongue.

So, "Well Done" LASSN, on your fantastic/valuable Service, and "Many Thanks," once again'

Petula Akpan, Wellbeing Co-ordinator, Linking Leeds Social Prescribing Service

Collaborators

There are also a number of other organisations who we work very closely in collaboration with. Some of these we have mentioned already, such as Leeds City College. Those below are just some of the organisations we work closely with, but there are many other too, including RETAS, PAFRAS and Leeds Refugee Forum.

Conversation Club Leeds



The Conversation Club in Leeds host a group for refugees and asylum seekers every week to meet others and practise their conversation skill. This group is run by volunteers, so we were invited to run a training session for them around teaching English, removing barriers to learning and useful

resources. We hope to run this session again for the other volunteers who were unable to attend as well as having a joint skill share in the future with the Conversation Club volunteers and LASSN teachers together to share ideas.

'The training absolutely flew by! Most of our volunteers have no prior knowledge of teaching English, and the information covered in LASSN's training was just right... I had very positive comments from the volunteers afterwards - everyone found it not only extremely useful, but also very enjoyable.' **Dot Read , Chair, Conversation Club Leeds**

City of Sanctuary

We are a member of the Leeds City of Sanctuary Steering Group and regularly attend the meetings which consist of many individuals and organisations in Leeds. One of the activities we were involved with through this collaboration was helping to facilitate an event run by Leeds City Council and Leeds City of Sanctuary to discuss the experiences of being a refugee or asylum seeker in Leeds and how this could be improved. The feedback from this day is being used by Leeds City Council to shape the approach going forward as it aims to become a Council of Sanctuary.

Leeds Voluntary Interpreter Service

We have been involved in a multi-agency group to set up a project called Leeds Voluntary Interpreting Service. The aims are to provide voluntary interpreters to organisations and individuals in the third sector who are otherwise unable to access them. Volunteer interpreters will then be given an opportunity to use their skills, and they will also be offered expenses and training. Interpreters will also be offered support, for example when a client is struggling with mental health issues, and will be given space for a debrief after the session. This should improve the experience for everyone involved, including the client. It will mean that LASSN clients interested in interpreting will have the opportunity to access excellent training and possibly a route into paid employment.

We have been involved with the steering group, particularly around consultation of interpreters, people who use interpreters and organisations using them also to find out their experiences and consider what they would want from the project while in the planning stage.

Leeds Bread Co-op



We want to see learners not only grow in confidence but also develop skills which may lead to employment, as well as following their passions. Leeds Bread Co-op approached us with the idea of running a 10 week course for LASSN clients interested in a career in baking. They consulted with us about what clients would most benefit from then created the course. There were 5 LASSN clients involved, with each finding the course really beneficial.

'People feel they've learnt a lot about baking and working in a food production environment. They've all had the opportunity to take the Level 2 certificate in Food Hygiene. What's nice for us is that they also say they've got on really well with other people on the

course and that they're happy with the course leaders, and have enjoyed coming to the bakery.'

Olivia Snook, Education and Community Team, Leeds bread Co-op

University of Leeds

Over the last four years we have been approached by the School of Languages at the University of Leeds to speak with students about the work LASSN does so that they can share this with their peers. This means that we can raise our profile and support students in their studies, as quite a large percentage of our volunteers are students.

Community Activities

Picnic

'For a few hours I could forget all my troubles. This was like heaven.' **Moustafa***, LASSN client.



This summer we hosted a picnic for anyone involved with LASSN to come along to and share food, games and conversation. There was a face painting stall which The Princes Trust kindly volunteered their time to run and we also had a Brazilian drummer who taught us a thing or two! Between 80-100 people came throughout the afternoon and it was wonderful to see people making friends and having fun together.

Rugby



'Being here in the stadium is such an amazing occasion. I cannot do this in my country.' **Shazia, Iran.**

Leeds Rhinos donated us 30 tickets to take LASSN clients to one of their matches. A great time was had by all with the Rhinos definitely gaining some new fans! It was very special to hear some sharing that it was the first time they had been allowed in a sports stadium, while another spoke of the happy memories it remind her of when her son used to play.

Theatre



'I have been in the UK 10 years and I have never been to the theatre. What an amazing experience. So much fun and the children loved it.' **Nafiso***, EaH learner

LASSN were gifted 10 tickets by Leeds Playhouse to attend The Enormous Crocodile. It was a beautiful, musical extravaganza and will live long in the memory of all who attended. We are already looking forward to next years' show!

Refugee World Cup



We were involved again this year with Leeds Refugee Forum, Leeds United Foundation and Leeds City Council in organising and running the Refugee World Cup as part of Refugee Week . Over 20 teams came together in the sunshine to enjoy a great day. It was also the first year that there has been a separate women, non binary and transgender tournament, with 4 teams taking part. We hope to grow the number of teams in that tournament next summer. LASSN entered teams in both competitions and put up a great performance too!

We also took the opportunity to have stalls at the event this year with Leeds City College, Leeds Anti Raids, PAFRAS, MESMAC, Yorkshire St Pauli and Holbeck Moor bringing materials to share.

Five-a-side

With regards to football, we also run a five-a-side group for refugees and asylum seekers to play every week. There are a number of LASSN clients who attend, but it has also meant that other organizations can refer people to join and it is open to anyone in Leeds who is a refugee or asylum seeker. This can help people to learn English and also gives them a space to do what they love and feel part of a community.

LASSN's AGM



We always want to make sure that events at LASSN are as accessible to all as possible as well as enjoyable! Our AGM was a joyous occasion and we had around 100 people attend to share a meal together, listen to a presentation of a year in the life of LASSN and also watch a series of performances by Leeds Sanctuary's Got Talent. Much like the picnic, these are a great opportunity for clients and volunteers alike to meet others involved with LASSN.

Learning and next steps

We continually strive to make the experience of English at Home as good as it can be for both volunteers and learners. Over the year a number of areas have been identified through discussions with those involved in the project which have shaped what we would like to adapt or add to what we are doing.

Relationship with College

It has been really exciting this year to deepen the relationship with Leeds City College. As mentioned, this has led to visits to the College to ease transition for learners from one-to-one tuition into a formal educational setting. A number of learners with very basic English have requested a teacher with a shared home language which is normally not possible. However, we were able to present a session to students at the College studying Level 1 ESOL or above about volunteering with us and currently have a few people who responded in training to volunteer. We will continue to make these presentations to more groups next year. We have also had teaching staff apply to volunteer with us who have great skill and experience.

We have also begun developing the referral system from the College to LASSN if students are no longer able to attend formal classes. We will look to strengthen this next year to make sure waiting times are as low as possible.

Developing Resources for Teachers

As we earlier mentioned, we have created a pack for all volunteers when they first begin teaching, filled with advice and resources. However, feedback from teachers has suggested a pack specifically for teaching beginners would be useful, so we will look at producing this. We will also create specific pack for teaching regular topics, such as parents' evenings and going to the doctor.

From Skill Shares and conversations with teachers, we are able to make a note of areas where more resources are needed. We then have 2 volunteers who strive to find high quality resources on those topics that can be added to the Teaching Resources homepage.

These volunteers are going to begin creating resources specific to Leeds including images of places of interest as well as possible walks around the city and surrounding areas.

Another resource we will develop is around Language 1 interference. This will give information about the learners' home language and what are the main barriers someone from that language may face when learning English, e.g. sounds not present, no capital letters etc.

Dissemination of Information to learners

We are often made aware of information which can be very important for our learners, some of it time sensitive and urgent, such as during Covid, the riots and also for the new E-Visas. It may be information for new groups or classes in their area, volunteering opportunities or foodbanks. Due to the large amount of information LASSN often is aware of, we are

discussing the best ways of making sure what is important reaches learners in a timely fashion and are seeing if there is a better system for this.

Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Strategy

We are maintaining volunteer numbers, although nationally it is becoming far harder to recruit and retain volunteers. Due to this, as an organisation we are creating a volunteer recruitment and retention strategy to be more deliberate in our approach.

Focus Groups

We want to make sure that the needs of our client's and volunteers are at the heart of everything we do at LASSN. Due to this, we will be running focus groups with them both next year to make sure they are able to shape how the Project will operate after the current funding comes to an end and we plan for the future. Professional Development-

The continued professional development of the staff on English at Home is very important to us to expand our skills and knowledge. Over the reporting period we have completed the below sessions and will continue to identify training priorities going forward.

- Leadership Management Course- Clore
- Active Bystander Training – Protection Approaches
- Housing Training – Leed City Council
- Volunteer management session - Voluntary Action Leeds
- Supporting volunteers meeting - Migrant English Support Hub
- E-Visa Training – Home Office
- Lone Working training – Be Magnificent

Thank you so much for taking the time to read our report. If you have any questions please email english@lassn.org.uk.



Farouz with his certificate after moving on the College*

Please note, all names in the report with an * having been changed to respect privacy