Our vision is that by 2012, people are able to get the English language skills that they need to connect with wider communities and have successful working lives. We want to increase the effectiveness of services for this group of people so that a greater number can fulfil their potential at work and in our communities.

Almost all people who require help with ESOL want and need to work sooner or later in their lives. The fundamental skills and attributes that make us ‘employable’ are also those that underpin cohesive communities. We recognise that functional English language is vital if people are to support their families effectively, be part of wider communities, get involved in volunteering and be successful at work.

Our vision is ambitious. We want it to reach all those that need help with English language skills. To do this, we want to lead a vision that is shared by our partners in the Regional Development Agencies, Jobcentre Plus, Local Authorities and other key agencies, supported by our Government departments. Together, we will align our investment to support those with greatest need, and, where appropriate, encourage contributions from employers and individuals.

People with English Language needs have varying goals and requirements, depending on their circumstances, skills and other needs. We can identify three overlapping stages which help to illustrate the varying purposes of ESOL provision at different points in peoples’ lives.

These stages are defined by peoples’ priorities. People within and across these stages have differing levels of English, individual needs and aspirations. Our vision is to make sure that for people across the stages, the ‘customer journey’ is personalised, supported and seamless so that their individual needs and goals are met. The examples of individual journeys that accompany this paper highlight the challenges faced by individuals in moving from one stage to the next and point to the radical changes that need to happen for our vision to transform existing processes, provision and structures.

People at **Stage 1** will generally need intensive support with ESOL, set in the context of accessing public services, supporting family life and connecting with communities outside of those of their ‘mother tongues’. A number will have partners that may be working or trying to get a job. They may also have children. Almost all will want or need to work in the future. Enabling people at Stage 1 to understand the education...
system, UK labour market and work culture helps them to take the first steps towards employment, and encourages inter generational and community cohesion.

People in **Stage 2** will require ESOL that is embedded as part of wider work focused skills development, including support to find, move into and stay in sustainable jobs. The length and composition of programmes will depend on their skills and other needs. People who are in work (**Stage 3**) will need ESOL that is tailored to help do their jobs more effectively and to get better jobs.

For people in Stages 2 and 3, getting better ESOL skills also means that they are less isolated and more able to connect to communities outside of their ‘mother tongues’. It should also mean that employers’ needs are met and the business benefits of ESOL training recognised.

The critical role of ESOL for **all** people is to enable progression through these stages. Progression must be appropriate to the ‘life circumstances’ and starting points of individuals, but swift enough to help people challenge and stretch themselves to reach their full potential. The intensity of provision is crucial to progression. A minimum of 8 hours per week for people at Stage 1 is essential, particularly if we are to enable them to progress on a pathway that ultimately leads them into sustainable paid employment.

**Guiding Principles**

To achieve the vision, ESOL must have the flexibility to cater for individuals across these three stages, as well as employers of varying sizes and from different sectors. The vision must be understood and shared at all levels so that local priorities can inform regional strategy and investment. The following set of guiding principles give a framework of understanding that can be interpreted to suit local conditions so that ESOL is:

- **Goal focused**: helping people and employers to achieve the wider goals that are meaningful for them. Goals for people in Stage 1 may include getting involved in the life of local schools, tenants’ associations, hospitals or volunteering organisations. For those in Stages 2 and 3, goals will be much more sharply focused on work. Although qualifications are important, they form only one measure of progress and are not ends in themselves.

- **Integrated**: planning, funding and delivering ESOL as an integral part of wider packages that include other skills development (vocational, numeracy etc.) appropriate to their stage, as well as help with needs such as housing, health, debt, welfare etc. To deliver these integrated pathways and enable the achievement of meaningful goals, providers of all types must work together and play to their strengths.

- **Personalised**: meeting the varying needs of people across the three stages, and the diverse needs of different employers through personalised and tailored ESOL programmes. Embedding ESOL in provision that is appropriate for the person’s goal is critical, and ensuring that the provision matches changing needs and developing aspirations.

- **Incentivising progression**: recognising and rewarding progress towards a meaningful goal that is identified in an **Individual Action or Employability Plan**. The Plan should be portable and include key progression and transition points. Transferring from one stage to another should be supported and use the Plan as the thread eg: from Family Learning to vocational training with embedded ESOL.

- **Inclusive**: ensuring that people at pre-entry and Entry 1 and 2 (across all stages) are adequately supported so that they can progress into higher levels of skills development. This means ensuring that
ESOL is seen as an integral part of the Foundation Learning Tier and that cross-agency funding alignment is able to support the number of people requiring lower levels of provision.

These guiding principles enable the development of services for people with ESOL needs to dovetail with, and support the work to establish an Adult Advancement and Careers Service (including the Skills Health Check) and Integrated Employment and Skills services.

Realising the vision through strategic planning and investment

If our vision is to be realised, the importance of embedding ESOL as part of wider skills development must be reflected in strategic planning processes. ESOL investment should be identified in relation to how it supports the achievement of ‘meaningful goals’, not as a stand alone plan. This not only creates a better service for individuals and employers, but also helps to maximise the impact of investment in ESOL and in other skills development and support.

Cross-agency partnerships, protocols and processes for planning and investment will need to be in place nationally, regionally and locally to enable this strategic embedding. The process outlined below is suggested to support this approach. It draws on local intelligence and priorities to inform regional (and in some cases, sub-regional) planning and investment.

1. Cross agency regional skills plan sets the strategic context and wider framework for ESOL.
2. Intelligence (ESOL groups/employer/sector) analysed by LSC Partnership Teams, and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP).
3. Local planning priorities drawn up using the ‘3 stages’ and segments to guide, and cross referenced with Local.
4. Summary of local priorities fed into cross agency planning at sub-regional and regional levels.
5. Regional plans identify where local priorities can be met through alignment of all funding (local, regional & national).
6. Regional plan implemented at local level through cross agency partnership. Use LSP as the mechanism?
There is a finite amount of public investment available (LSC and other) for ESOL. The strategic planning process should be predicated on identifying priorities for investment and then aligning partner funding to address as many as possible within the resources available. This will also help partners to identify and agree where contributions from employers and individuals are appropriate.

Agreement that any local ‘pots’, Disadvantaged Area Funds etc., are spent in accordance with what is agreed regionally is vital. Similarly, ensuring that ‘national’ funding streams such as those of the DWP and Home Office can be factored into regional and local planning is critical. There isn’t an effective mechanism for this currently.

Currently, the LSC, JCP, RDA and Local Authorities are required to work together to identify how the provision that they fund will contribute to the achievement of LAA/MAA targets. There is no consistent mechanism to facilitate this, or to link LAA/MAAs with cross agency planning at regional level, for example, through Employment and Skills Boards.

Indications are that the effectiveness of relationships and processes for LAAs/MAAs are very variable. In addition, the number and type of targets vary in accordance with what Local Authorities have prioritised and may not always maximise cross agency involvement. It is also important that there is clarity about the relationship between LAAs/MAAs and the PSA target.

The development of an effective mechanism that enables a response to local conditions within an agreed cross-agency regional strategic framework is critical for successful planning not only of ESOL, but also other skills provision and services. This will help to drive up the effectiveness of ESOL and maximise the impact of the significant public investment in this area of skills development.

The mechanism should be a two-way, iterative process. This would involve local information contributing to the development of regional strategy, alongside regional priorities and in the context of national policy. The resulting strategy and regional implementation plan is then interpreted locally in terms of detailed planning for delivery. This allows for critical local input as well as flexibility in delivery, but means that strategic direction can be maintained at regional level.

Building on the relationships that are being established for LAAs/MAAs is a useful starting point and will avoid the potential for duplicate structures being developed. The discussions presented here are just a starting point.

The type of local intelligence used to inform planning is important and should include:

- ESOL needs and ‘hotspots’ (isolated communities, disadvantage etc.)
- Current take up and composition of cohort
- Research and other feedback on key groups – including information on how to attract people who are not taking up ESOL
- Sector and local employer needs – vacancies/predicted vacancies and business development

The 3 stages outlined earlier in the paper are useful as a first step in identifying the major investment groups and broad balance of priorities, for example:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Possible investment streams and percentage split</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>DAF (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People not in work with family</td>
<td>RDA (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and/or community is the main</td>
<td>Home Office (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>priority</td>
<td>LSC – Family Learning, Family Language, Foundation Learning Tier (60%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, further ‘segmentation’ is needed so that the amount and type of investment needed for people with different skills needs and circumstances within each of the stages can be identified. The segmentation exercise that underpins the Licence to Skill approach (attached Annexes A&B) could provide a useful starting point for this refinement (note: the detail on benefits etc is currently being updated). For example, if at Local Authority or regional level it was identified that for people in Stage 2, 60% had Entry 1 or below ESOL skills and significant other barriers to work (Segment 2A), agencies can agree which funding streams supports these individuals.

**How will we know if we’re successful?**

Traditionally, we have measured our success through ESOL qualifications achievements and progress in reaching the PSA target. Whilst these remain valid, our vision positions ESOL as a critical element in an integrated range of services that help people to achieve wider goals. Our measures of success must be broader in order to reflect this.

We also need to be clear about outputs and outcomes. A success output could be vocational qualifications that have been achieved with ESOL support. The success outcome would be individuals helping out at the local school, becoming a volunteer, getting a job or moving into a better job – depending on their stage.

The vision also highlights the need to recognise and reward progress towards a goal – especially where it may take a number of years for someone to move into a job.