



# Welcome to Leeds

Course Title: English for Asylum Seekers

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## **Project Overview**

The Welcome to Leeds Project is a RETAS initiative designed to help newly arrived asylum seekers and refugees to settle into the UK. The project includes delivering enrichment activities, orientation and social events. RETAS now has an exciting opportunity to deliver a Welcome to Leeds English Language programme to Asylum Seekers in Leeds.

## **Asylum Seeker Needs**

Whilst awaiting to hear of the progress of their applications, Asylum Seekers are housed by the government in different parts of the country. During this time, they are settling into a new culture, climate and language with little financial support and restricted access to mainstream activity including welfare, education and employment. The waiting, isolation, confinement, and uncertainty can lead to mental health issues. The Welcome to Leeds Project offers an early, friendly and positive pathway to integration for asylum seekers and attempts to provide relief to this situation by arranging enrichment and social activities that can contribute to making Leeds a welcoming city and achieve effective integration.

Covid-19 and lockdown measures have made situation worse for asylum seekers in terms of access to vital support and social participation especially those accommodated in hotels often located in the outskirts of the city. Hence, for the first time, due to a high demand, and the fact that asylum seekers are unable to pay for their travel expenses to come to RETAS classrooms, we are resolved to deliver on-site English Language classes in some of the asylum accommodations to help ease the transition to the UK for a specific group of asylum seekers currently staying in temporary asylum accommodations in Leeds.

## **Programme Vision**

The English for Asylum Seekers Programme is atypical of traditional ESOL classes as it incorporates a more holistic approach to language learning. The programme objectives are to provide mental stimulation, language learning and social activities embedded in a series of six stand-alone sessions. As such, a sole focus on producing structured/classroom-based language is secondary and instead the focus is on providing practice with fluency, boosting confidence, and providing social enrichment through communicative and experiential language learning activities.

## **The Site and Covid-19 Safety**

Sessions will take place at a hotel where the learners are staying, in a large events room. There are tables, chairs, a flipchart board and a projector available. For Covid-19 Safety, a maximum of 24 learners, 6 volunteers and 1 teacher are permitted in the room. Teachers and volunteers will need to sign in and out of the premises and submit to a temperature check. Hand sanitisers are available at the entrance and masks/face shields are expected to be worn.

## **RETAS Volunteer Support**

Volunteers are not expected to act as interpreters unless absolutely necessary. This is to ensure that the focus remains on speaking English. Volunteers will be able to provide support in English for learner groups, individual learners and lower-level learners to ensure everyone is able to follow and engage in the sessions and to help teachers manage the group. If, under the Welcome to Leeds project, interpreting or other support needs are required, volunteers or asylum seekers can communicate with the Project Coordinator.

## **The Learner “Group”**

The hotel currently houses 117 asylum seekers and we anticipate a number of them will be interested in attending English Language classes. In order to accommodate as many learners as possible, whilst also maintaining educational quality and Covid-19 safety, class sizes are capped at 24 per session. However, to ensure as many individuals as possible get access to some language learning, there are no fixed groups and sessions will be run on a first come, first-served basis. Therefore, sessions are expected to be stand-alone as groups may change slightly from week to week.

## Programme Content

The table below suggests some useful topics and activities that can be employed to help deliver the Programme Vision detailed above. However, in order to ensure the programme is holistic and adapted to learner need, there is an expectation that learners will be involved in the topic selection process from the beginning to guarantee classes are engaging and useful. Goals should be SMART as far as possible, and activities should encourage learning through repetition, collaboration and self-discovery. Each class should begin with a different Getting to Know You Activity, as groups may change, and end with a reflection/review activity. Learners who want homework can be given this, but it is not expected as a part of the programme. For any questions and suggestions around the programme content please contact the Learning Manager.

Week	Topic	Goals	Suggested Activities
Week 1	Food and Health	To provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A welcoming environment</li> <li>- Mental stimulation</li> <li>- Language learning</li> <li>- Socialisation</li> </ul>	<p><b>Speaking:</b> Information gap exercises Routine dialogues Pronunciation games Task-based Learning (e.g. planning a trip, going to Trinity Shopping Centre)</p> <p><b>Reading:</b> Authentic material (e.g supermarket leaflets, bus timetables, street signs, menus) Map of Leeds</p> <p><b>Listening:</b> Comprehension tasks Interactive tasks (e.g. following directions, following instructions, writing down a shopping list)</p> <p><b>Writing:</b> Spelling quizzes Handwriting practice Writing personal details (Name, address, DOB etc)</p>
Week 2	Hobbies and Interests	<b>Outcomes</b>	
Week 3	Shopping and Money	<u>Learners will:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Get to know important places in Leeds</li> <li>- Gain confidence in basic daily communications</li> </ul>	
Week 4	Travel and Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Build key beginner vocabulary</li> <li>- Socialise and make friends</li> </ul>	
Week 5	Health and Wellbeing	<u>Learners will be able to:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use numbers, dates, days of the week</li> <li>- Use key phrases for daily life in the UK</li> </ul>	
Week 6	Exercise and Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ask and answer simple questions</li> <li>- Write/give personal information</li> </ul>	

## Barriers to Learning

Barrier	Explanation	Potential Solutions
<b>Mental Health</b>	As explained above, learners may have mental health concerns as a result of isolation, stress from their situation and unfamiliarity in a new environment.	The holistic nature of this programme means that learner comfort and mental health take as precedence over language learning. As such, focus on simpler activities to boost confidence and morale. Grade activities up as needed.  If there is a serious concern, please report this to the RETAS Designated Safeguarding Lead.
<b>Roman Script</b>	The learners will come from a variety of language backgrounds, but some key languages are Tigrinya, Arabic, Kurdish Sorani and Amharic. These are Semitic scripts and learners may struggle if they are expected to write too much in class. Especially if they are just beginning to learn the script.	Incorporate writing activities in short, focused bursts to help learners gain confidence in writing their name, address and other personal information.  Activities should be verbal before they are written in order to build understanding before practice. As such focus on teaching listening and speaking verbally as far as possible. This should be adapted to learner level and confidence.
<b>Mixed-ability Learning</b>	The level variation is estimated at Pre-Entry to Entry 1 and, due to the groups being irregular, it is anticipated there will be some mixed-ability groups. This can cause frustration for learners and teachers but is often unavoidable when dealing with irregular adult cohorts.	As far as possible, activities should be open-ended in order to grade up and down as needed. This includes building conversation, teaching basic vocabulary and pronunciation and teaching fixed functional phrases (lexical chunks). The use of images is recommended to ensure clarity.  Volunteers will be available as learning assistants and can be assigned to specific groups or specific learners to help clarify instructions, boost confidence and engage learners.  Grammar should be taught as it emerges rather than as a fixed outcome.
<b>Language</b>	There may be cases outside of the classroom where information needs to be communicated in the learner's own language.	Contact the Project Co-ordinator or a volunteer to help interpret or to explain the issue at a later point in time. Stronger learners can help interpret too.