

# 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 was an embedded English course to help women develop their language skills and improve their confidence in communicating with midwives, doctors and other healthcare professionals. It helped them prepare for the birth of their baby and make decisions about their birth plan. It was a targeted intervention aimed at women who would require an interpreter for antenatal appointments and for the birth of their baby.**

**ESOL with Infants was a follow-on project which helped 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 raised awareness of progression routes for further ESOL provision. It was aimed at parents/carers of children aged under 2 who would 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:

- Confidence in communicating with health services
- Language and communication skills
- Confidence in talking to their child using the gifted books
- Awareness of ESOL progression routes
- Social interaction
- 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 was 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 made them feel less isolated due to feeling more confident speaking English.
- One of the participants went on to run her own stay and learn sessions for babies and toddlers.
- Some participants completed additional accredited courses for ESOL.
- 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

