



# ESOL Programme Annual Report 2022/23

**Katherine Low  
Settlement**

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This short report reviews Katherine Low Settlement's English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programme over the last academic year 2022/23.

Our ESOL programme has been generously supported by the National Lottery Community Fund and Wandsworth Council's Lifelong Learning Department; as well as by our fabulous volunteers and partners giving their time, commitment and passion to support our amazing students. Without your support we would not have been able to make such a difference to so many people's lives. Thank you.

Note: Names have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

## **1. About Katherine Low Settlement**

Katherine Low Settlement (KLS) is a busy charity that has been serving Battersea and the wider Wandsworth community since 1924. We are dedicated to building stronger communities and enable people to challenge and find ways out of poverty and isolation.

We run a range of our own community programmes to support children, young people and their families, older people, women and refugee communities. We campaign for social change. We also incubate and support small charities and social businesses to start-up and thrive. A passionate, committed and skilled team of 36 staff and 200 volunteers regularly make a difference to about 5% of the local population in Battersea.

Visit: [www.klsettlement.org.uk](http://www.klsettlement.org.uk)

## **2. The Need for ESOL courses in Wandsworth**

*"My English skills have improved. Now I'm happy. When I go to the GP I can solve my problem because now I can speak and communicate. In the beginning it was very hard for me. Now I've got more confidence in the shop I work in."*

Language is the key that unlocks an integrated, fulfilled life in the UK. Without it, people arriving in Britain are unable to work, to make friends, even to go to the doctor or get on a bus. Having reached safety, people want to build a new life here. Knowing how to speak English is absolutely essential for this; for a life where refugees can fully participate and fully contribute.

The 2011 Census measured Wandsworth's population at 307,000, of which 108,573 (35.3%) were non-UK born. In London alone, research has identified over 300 Languages spoken by children at home (Children England, 2013; Census, 2021). Wandsworth ranked 24 in the top districts in England and Wales for percentage of population in the Language Needs Indicator, 2001; with 39,265 adults (17% of the adult, working population in Wandsworth) with language needs (Census, 2011).

There is a real demand for ESOL services in Wandsworth and across London. KLS' answer to this has been to continue to grow and develop our ESOL programme over the last three and a

half years, so we can support a larger number of adult learners, across a range of English proficiency levels.

*“London needs ESOL... Being able to speak English not only enables people to get jobs, it also encourages integration and a cohesive society, develops family capital and improves health and wellbeing.”* GLA, 2012; London Enriched Strategy, 2013

### **3. About KLS’ ESOL programme**

Katherine Low Settlement has a strong track record of providing ESOL community courses since 1999. We provide free English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses for migrant and refugee communities in Wandsworth. This enables our students to improve their English literacy and language across the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. We significantly revitalised our ESOL and adult education offer from 2014 and have not looked back. We support around 100 adult learners each year.

#### **a. Target Group**

*‘I took my E3 Writing exam in the summer and passed, I felt confident enough to take the test. It is thanks to my teachers who believe in me and help me to believe in myself.’*

We focus on working with:

- People living in areas of deprivation in London Borough of Wandsworth (principally from Battersea communities)
- Members of BAME groups, prioritising newly-arrived refugees and asylum seekers
- Learners with crèche-age children
- Learners without a full level 2 qualification

<b>Students 2022/23</b>	<b>No.</b>
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Number of students 2022/23	106
Retention (finishers)	99 (93%)

Our students come from the local community in Battersea and across Wandsworth. Some of their children attend our homework and holiday clubs too, and many attend our parent workshops we run on a Friday with our Love to Learn education team.

Our students live on low incomes and in poverty, struggle with English and to integrate into the wider local community. The vast majority are women (96%). Our youngest student is 21 and eldest 71 years old. The average age is 39. They come from 31 different nationalities. Most are from refugee communities.

Our students are supported by our fantastic team of 9 staff and 36 volunteers.



## **b. Outcomes**

*“I feel like my listening and understanding of English has improved.*

*I like everything about the class.”*

We work hard to achieve the following differences in our students lives.

Difference / Outcomes	Year 4 – targets 2022/23	Year 4 – actuals 2022/23	Notes
Improve their English literacy and language skills across speaking, listening, reading and writing	80% of learners achieve a nationally recognised certificate (NOCN)	90%	<p>Realistic targets enable students to achieve based on need, ability and time available. Introducing Employability which is assessment based allowed students to gain certificates.</p> <p>In 2023-24 we are introducing English and Maths awards so that more students can achieve in bite-sized pieces, based on continuous assessment.</p>
Increase their confidence by using their new English skills in 'real life', out in the community	90% of learners will increase their confidence	95%	<p>The Word Cloud illustration (see above) is a collection of all the vocabulary students collaborated on for end of term evaluations across all the classes.</p> <p>This vocabulary reflects a happy confident cohort of students</p>
Reduce isolation by making better connections through new friendships and relationships	<p>95% social contact with other people at least once a week</p> <p>95% strengthen their informal network with class mates, neighbours, and KLS staff &amp; vols</p>	95%	<p>96% of our students are women. This is because of the particular barriers we break down to accessing education:</p> <p>Free Creche; Free classes; open enrolment- need, not status; class times designed around school hours.</p> <p>Women from refugee and immigrant backgrounds are most likely to suffer from social isolation often away from extended family and support networks. KLS provides a place to rebuild social networks,</p>

Be able to better support their children with their homework, education and relationship with local schools	80% (of those with children) report being able to support their children's education	85%	Many students report being able to get involved in their children's Maths homework, having studied the same subject in class. We are collaborating on more projects with Love to Learn, which runs after school homework and wellbeing support for the children of many of our students.
Progress into further education and employment	10% will progress each year	11 people (11%)	Many students at Level 1 have the opportunity to move on to employment or further study. See below for more details.

In addition to qualifications there have been a number of other tangible benefits that our students have achieved including:

**Increasing in confidence and self-esteem.** Our students are able to use their improved English skills in 'real life', out in the community - see the case studies and quotes throughout this report.

**Making new friendships and widening their social networks.** Their children have also got to know one another through their time in the crèche.

**Increasing the education support they are now able to give their children at home with their homework.** They have reported being more engaged in their children's education e.g. attending parents evening and being able to engage with teachers more.

**Increasing their involvement in other community organisations.** Our students are more involved with, for example, their children's schools, faith organisations, community centres, migrant support charities etc., because they are developing their English skills, which in turn has improved their confidence and self-esteem.

**Increased participation with local partnerships.** Students are using the connections KLS has fostered with other charities and partners and are getting involved in other local projects.

### Members Story: What a difference four years makes

Laila came to us four years ago. She was exhausted from bringing up children in a one-bedroomed flat and trying to keep them entertained while her husband worked from home. Her four boys ranged in age from 6 months to 8 years old. Laila was isolated, with her family scattered all over the world and did not have any independence: no bank account, no friends, speaking little English. Another parent from her children's primary school recommended our free ESOL classes at KLS, she came and signed up to our waiting list and was assessed for her class. She was able to leave her baby and toddler with our creche team while she studied.

Laila was lucky to have some education from Sudan and learnt quickly. She was then able to enrol on a childcare course we were running. This gave her the opportunity to study for a future career, but also to engage in discussions around family and parenting. The students were also encouraged to volunteer in the creche to gain experience. This gave Laila the opportunity to get financial independence as she needed a bank account as proof for getting a DBS check. The chance to reflect on her own living situation and the strength and mental independence she gained from her new friends in class, did not go unnoticed at home and she and the 4 boys were ejected from their home one weekend in late 2020.

We were able to contact Battersea Coronavirus Angels, which was born out of Covid, and a volunteer got her some emergency cash (she had £2 in her pocket). We were able to contact children's social services and she was found emergency accommodation. We lent her a laptop and connected her with Citizen's Advice and South West London Law Centre. These were able to help her navigate all the different agencies, lawyers, social services and paperwork she needed to deal with.

Fast forward to 2023: Laila has been a champion for two other students suffering from domestic violence at home; she has found accommodation suitable for herself and 4 boys; she has studied on a level 2 Teaching Assistant course at a local community centre, while working part-time at her son's primary school. She has now been offered a full-time classroom assistant post. She is most excited about being financially independent. She is also very aware of her role in teaching her boys to value and respect our mothers, sisters and daughters.

### **c. Our creche enables students with young children to study**

*"For me everything is going well. The teachers are kind. I also like it because my daughter is taken care of in the crèche when I study. She is happy to come to KLS. When I come to classes, I learn something new every time."*

We provide a free creche (on site) for those students with young children (pre-school), which around 25% of our students use. Many of our students were able to study as their children were being well looked after in our on-site crèche. It is run by an experienced team of staff and volunteers (many of whom are former students).

**2022/23**

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Children accessing our ESOL crèche	43
No. of Students	112

% of Students who need childcare, without which they could not study

38%



#### **d. Recruitment, oversubscribed classes and a waiting list class**

KLS has well established links and relationships with Battersea and communities across Wandsworth – especially refugee families and those in so called ‘hard to reach’ communities. We have a multi-lingual team of staff and volunteers who speak most local languages including Somali, Arabic, Tigrinya, Turkish, Italian, Spanish and French.

We recruit mainly through ‘word of mouth’ but are oversubscribed, such is the demand. We are over capacity by around 30% each year. We signpost and refer students to other ESOL providers where possible. However, most organisations close their admissions for the year in October.

We keep an open waiting list which allows for spaces to be filled until the October half-term. Late starters after this are able to attend a low-level waiting list class from January-July , so at least they are learning some English before we can offer them a full place the following September. It gives them access to some classes, as well as acclimatizing to regular study. This waiting list class runs once a week for two hours, run by two volunteers.



KLS could do more if it had increased funding, staff and volunteers to provide more of its high-quality ESOL services for local people in Battersea and the wider Wandsworth community.

### 2022/23

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No. of Students	106
No. who join our Waiting List class	23
No. referred onto other providers	1

#### **e. Attendance**

Our English, Maths and IT classes continued as normal. We continued to offer and develop a range of extracurricular activities particularly fitness, yoga and Discover London.

However the Pandemic is continuing to impact on our students and our classes. Attendance was definitely lower and a challenge. Students are not able to attend for a variety of reasons: off sick (including long Covid), having to look after sick children at home, overseas travel to look after ill family members, housing issues, school closures, stricter Benefit requirements (Universal Credit increased requirement to search for more work and accompanying sanctions).

Sadly, post-Covid we are seeing a lot of relationship and family breakdowns which is affecting the mental health of our members and all areas of their lives. Anxiety is also very prevalent, especially amongst the Afghans and Somalis whose families still living in their birth country are facing renewed uncertainty with the worsening situations. Similarly issues with immigration and public perceptions of this, post-Brexit and the 2022 Nationality and Borders Act, are also having a detrimental effect. Although these issues may not seem to be issues that affect attendance, this affects the invisible consequences of mental health issues on already vulnerable people.

We are not alone. Other ESOL providers are telling us they are experiencing the same difficulties with their students.

Here is an example of the reasons giving for non-attendance for just one of our classes of 19 students:

#### **f. Exams and Qualifications**

*“Thanks to KLS, I have now passed my ‘Life In The UK’ test. I have wanted to do this for a few years, but because I took my E3 Writing exam in the summer and passed (!), I felt confident enough to take the test. It is thanks to my teachers who believe in me and help me to believe in myself.”*

All students, should they wish, can take exams and gain a nationally recognised certificate with NOCN (National Open College Network).

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**2022/23**

Exam results – passed (n.)	90%
(for students in Entry 1, 2, 3, Level 1 English SFL; E2, E3, L1, L2 Functional skills Maths)	
No. of students who chose to sit an exam	58

Since 2020 we have been entering less students for exams but gaining better results. We achieved this by holding 1:1 meeting early in the year and discussing realistic goals based on diagnostic assessment and agreeing an individual plan. This allows the student the space to think about what they want to achieve and is followed up with subsequent meetings at relevant points in the academic year.



**g. Moving onto further education and employment**

We are conscious that our students live on low incomes, mostly in poverty. The more able they are to work and bring in additional income into the household the better, and/or to progress

into further education to gain further qualifications, which in turn will enable them to find better paid work.

Most of our students stay with us on average 3-5 years. They generally improve sufficiently to move up a class each year. And as the table shows below some leave us to move into further education and employment.

**2022/23**

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Students moving onto further education and employment	11
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This year:

- 2 are setting up their own businesses (a café and an online make-up business)
- 3 are moving into part-time work in health and social care
- 4 are moving to part-time higher-education courses and part-time work in hospitality
- 1 is studying Level 2 Teaching assistant
- 1 is going onto full time work as a TA in a local primary school (here story is below)

In addition

- 6 of our volunteers are moving on to study ESOL qualifications with Twin UK and CELTA.

### **Member Story – Sahar moving into employment**

Sahar came to KLS as a new mother, having heard from a friend that we run ESOL classes. She came from a traditional Sri Lankan background, where girls' education was not compulsory or prioritized and although she was living with a supportive husband, it was expected that she would be the one to stay home and look after the family. However, a free creche was all it took to liberate her from 24/7 homemaking and she jumped at the chance to study English four hours a week.

Sahar studied hard and improved quickly, moving from Entry 2 to Level 1 in a couple of years. Her son flourished in the creche and after a break for a second baby to be born, Sahar returned with renewed passion for a future career working with children. She then studied on the childcare course that was running alongside her ESOL class. She achieved her Level 1 Introduction to Early years qualification as well as Functional Skills Maths and English at Level 2. This gave her the confidence to apply to a Teaching Assistant course at South Thames College.

Sahar is now working full time at a Wandsworth Primary school, as a Teaching assistant, where she often teaches the class when the teacher is planning lessons.



### **g. Extra-curricular programme**

One of the things that has come out of evaluations in recent years is the students are more interested in language progression than in formal qualifications. Although some are still interested in gaining qualifications, because they need that marker of success, or because they have an intended career path for which they will need Maths and English, everyone recognises the benefits of what are often deemed 'soft skills' that can't be measured by a qualification.

Our students want to apply their English outside the classroom, in the real world. They want to try new things and learn new skills. They want to improve their friendships and social networks. For this reason we have developed our programme to include a range of employability and extracurricular activities, including yoga, dance, fitness and exercise, cooking, photography, sewing, pottery, cycling, a book club and Discover London. We will continue to grow, evolve and adapt these with our students.

We are steering the focus of our education programme away from exam results being the main measure of success.

### **Member Story – Amina**

Amina is from Somalia, has been in the UK for more than 20 years and has brought up her five children here. Amina has been coming to KLS for a number of years and has progressed slowly but surely both in confidence and language acquisition. She gained a Level 1 certificate two years ago on our Childcare course and has since been working as a valued member of the ESOL crèche team. She is a softly spoken woman with a strong presence.

During the winter lockdown the ESOL department partnered with the National Literacy Trust (NLT) to run an Early Years Together pilot project with Somali mothers and their pre-school children. This had to be adapted from the original face to face concept to being delivered online. This is where Amina shone. She recruited all the parents from her local networks to take part; she helped with training the parents for online delivery; she translated for both sides of the language divide and made sure that engagement remained high. It was a very successful pilot which is now being adapted and rolled out to different communities by the NLT. Amina was also able to see herself in a new light – as a community organiser and able to hold her own in English speaking situations.

Other interesting projects that Amina was involved in this year – promoting Covid Safety to the Somali community in a film made at KLS for Wandsworth Council. Following on from that Amina also co-scripted, translated into Somali and starred in, a short film allaying the fears around and promoting the benefits of the Covid Vaccination.

#### **4. Looking ahead**

One area we are developing further is our Level 1 class. We have identified a post-Level 1 bottleneck where students are continuing with classes at KLS despite having good language skills because they are unsure where to go next. They need guidance on further education, employment and/or self-employment. Previously, we have run employability sessions but we would like to integrate this into Level 1 classes in 2023/24.

Throughout the 36 week course, we would offer a Where Next? programme of formal writing and professional skills e.g. CVs, presentations, to help them prepare for their futures. We have good relationships with local businesses who are keen to offer our students advice and work experience (e.g. Battersea Power Station, Tideway). We would also like to create opportunities for job shadowing with KLS staff in a range of roles. We hope this approach will guide our students to take those next steps into further education, employment and self-employment.

#### **Kathryn – An ESOL Team volunteer**

“My time spent volunteering in the classroom has been indispensable for getting to know the students and involve them in the various projects. KLS ESOL teachers and the students are fantastic to work with. The teachers have helped so many students over the years to learn a new language, discover a great community and thrive in a challenging environment. I help the students with their writing and speaking skills during the class and support the teacher when required.

I really enjoy meeting students of all nationalities and getting to know them over the academic year. Some of the students are with KLS for years and it's lovely to see their language skills improve.

I wanted to do something completely different to my past career and I was in a position to be able to spare a few hours to volunteer. I taught English as a foreign language when I was a student but never had the opportunity to pursue this further. The staff and students are all very welcoming, don't be afraid to ask questions and enjoy your time in the classroom!"

**To volunteer with us please contact Chris Kelleher on [chris@klsettlement.org.uk](mailto:chris@klsettlement.org.uk)**  
There's more information on our website: [Volunteering - Katherine Low Settlement](#)



## 5. Conclusion

*"I am so happy in your class. I love you my teacher. Thanks for everything. I love you all KLS school."*

Katherine Low Settlement is in a unique position to offer ESOL and community learning because:

- **We're education-focused** – our primary objective is to get the best for our people, and it is this that determines the education support we provide. This is our area of expertise, which is provided in a safe, community learning space. We refer on to partner agencies for non-education issues.

- **We're barrier-free** – anyone can join regardless of economic or immigration status or language ability. There is no complex enrolment processes. We don't charge fees. We're based near major transport routes etc.
- **We provide a supportive community beyond the classroom** – with opportunities to expand their horizons and practise their language informally; as part of a local charity that can support their wider needs.
- **We're known and trusted in the community** – we have established a reputation of being a reliable, trustworthy and high-quality source of support. We are known for going the extra mile, working in a respectful and empowering manner that centres on the specific needs of our students and their families. This in turn improves retention and communication.
- **We're family friendly** – running our classes to fit around school drop off/pick up.
- **We offer free childcare** – this is a priority and we have the facilities. This is not available at most ESOL providers.
- **We have a specialist understanding of the local community** (particularly refugee/migrant) needs. KLS' diverse and multi-lingual staff and volunteer team reflects the backgrounds of our learners.
- **We are a registered accreditation centre** with NOCN (National Open College Network), so our learners can gain an accredited qualification; and, importantly, if they don't want one then that's OK too.
- **We value volunteers** – many of our students volunteer with us. It's great to practice their English and support our community services.
- **Our classes can be 'stepping stones'** – into further education and employment.

## 6. Contact

If you would like to get involved and/or know more about our ESOL programme then please get in touch with:

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