



## FINAL Evaluation

# the ESOL for Integration, Employability and Social Cohesion Project

Funded by Hillingdon Community Trust (HCT)

2017 - 2018

*“Now I can go to the GP alone. I can explain my problem to them easily. Before this course I couldn't go to the doctor without a person who helped me in speaking English.”*





## **1.0 Executive Summary**

The Integration, Employability and Social Cohesion Project was devised by Action West London to meet identified needs of third country national Hillingdon residents in preparing for greater participation in British society.

### **The 3 core elements of the Project were:**

1. English language training (ESOL)
2. Embedding the use of the internet to facilitate language learning and promote autonomy
3. Learning Facilitator training

These 3 elements of the project were seen as essential in order to help the integration of third country Hillingdon residents and are in line with the latest government strategy to promote greater community cohesion.

**Delivery of the project:** The project was delivered by Action West London staff. Close partnership was developed with two primary schools and two children's centres who played an important role in promoting and hosting the project.

### **Successful delivery of targeted outputs:**

In terms of achieving the targeted outputs outlined in the Project funding application, the **ESOL for Integration, Employability and Social Cohesion Project** has clearly been a success.

### **The project met and indeed exceeded its targets**

- 64 third country national women ESOL learners engaged in training and accredited qualifications compared to profiled target of 50
- 45 third country national women engaged in e-learning activities and improved their IT skills compared to profiled target of 40
- 10 host community volunteers attended our learning facilitator training and supported the delivery of courses in class and online.

### **Views of project beneficiaries:**

The beneficiaries of the project have been unanimous in their praise of the training and support they have received from the project and the positive and



flexible manner in which it was delivered. Many participants indicated that the project gave them the skills and confidence to integrate better into the society.

### **Innovative use of IT**

Furthermore, the project has been highly innovative in its use of ICT and has set up some very useful positive working methods to carry forward in any future initiative for which funding can be obtained.

## **2.0 Project Background, Context and Rationale**

The key aim of the **ESOL for Integration, Employability and Social Cohesion Project** was to promote community cohesion and to reduce the social exclusion experienced by Hillingdon residents from 6 Trust wards with low level English and IT skills.

The project was delivered in the borough of Hillingdon. Hillingdon is a very diverse borough with substantial pockets of deprivation as can be seen in the statistical information listed below based on two key wards:

- Botwell ward—country of birth of residents -21% Middle East / Asia; 10.8% Africa; Botwell has the highest number of borough residents born in Southern Asia (4% of borough total =612 residents) and Africa (9.4% of borough total= 1621 residents); including highest number of borough residents born in Somalia (553) Unemployed residents =6.4%; Economically inactive= 31.6%
- Pinkwell ward 25.1% residents born in Middle East / Asia, 9.6% Africa. Pinkwell has highest level of residents born in Middle East /Asia regions and highest number of residents born in Southern Asia. Pinkwell has highest numbers of residents stating they cannot speak English. Unemployed residents 5.4%; Economically inactive 30.2%

The key solution to improving integration for this participant group offered by this project was through a provision of focussed and clearly structured, accredited ESOL classes with emphasis on learner autonomy and an implementation of the latest developments in IT and e-learning. We also trained Classroom and Online Learning Facilitators to increase the reach and the scope of the project.

This is in line with the recent government strategy, the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper (March 2018), which postulates, among



other things, that boosting English language skills is fundamental to being able to take advantage of the opportunities of living in modern Britain such as getting a job, mixing with people and playing a full part in community life.

**Activities included:**

- **Structured ESOL classes** and opportunities to gain ESOL qualifications and certificates.
- **IT and internet skills** to become familiar with using the internet to access information, knowledge and social media
- **Training of Learning Facilitators** to increase learning opportunities in Hillingdon.
- **Flexible approach**--The programme was flexible and provided part time courses in outreach venues and free E-learning enabling Hillingdon residents to access additional online classes remotely.

**Action West London** –Action West London is a registered charity and social enterprise which over fifteen years has delivered a wide range of community, education, business, training and employment initiatives in West London.

Action West London has a team of experienced diverse staff and volunteers with excellent skills and experience to draw on.

Action West London has specialist knowledge of the large minority communities in West London, and particularly in the Boroughs of Ealing, Hounslow and Hillingdon where it operates.

**3.0 Key achievements**

<b>Output</b>	<b>Target Output for this year</b>	<b>Achieved to date</b>	<b>(Under) / Over achieved</b>
<b>Output1</b> Participants to improve language skills by attending structured and accredited ESOL classes.	<b>50</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>+14</b>
<b>Output2</b> Participants to improve IT skills and receive additional online language	<b>40</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>+5</b>



support through live online sessions, a dedicated Facebook or Google plus group.			
<b>Output3</b> To train volunteer classroom / online facilitators	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>+2</b>

### Commentary on project outputs

This project has been highly successful in recruiting participants and has exceeded the anticipated outputs. All participants were assessed and placed accordingly. They also discussed personal objectives for the course and discussed opportunities to practise English outside of the classroom. The ESOL training given was at levels Entry 1 to Level 1 and led to a recognised qualification from Edexcel. Online language support was offered as discrete live online classes and embedded in the 12 week course, e.g. references to language learning websites. Participants also had an opportunity to attend live sessions online some of which were facilitated by online training facilitators who received training as part of this project.

#### Lessons learnt:

AWL has proved able to perform at a considerably higher level of delivery than projected, because the staff and project were very flexible in their approach. The partnerships with and support from local schools and children centres proved essential in successfully delivering and promoting the project.

#### **This flexible approach included:**

- **Flexibility in Outreach venues** -Taking the learning to venues convenient to learners -- being prepared to find and use alternative premises for delivery that were more convenient for users to attend.
- **Flexibility of course times**—adjusting course delivery days and times to meet the needs of learners to ensure maximum attendance
- **Flexibility with child care arrangements**—being prepared to arrange crèche and child care to meet the needs of women learners—this was very important for many of the women participants.



- **Flexibility of course delivery**—using e –learning—this enabled learners to continue with their learning in their own homes and other venues in addition to the formal course classroom sessions.
- **Flexibility with social media**—encouraging learners to learn through using social media such as Google +.
- **Flexibility in using volunteers**—the course benefitted from the participation of peer group volunteer teachers who were trained as part of the course programme.

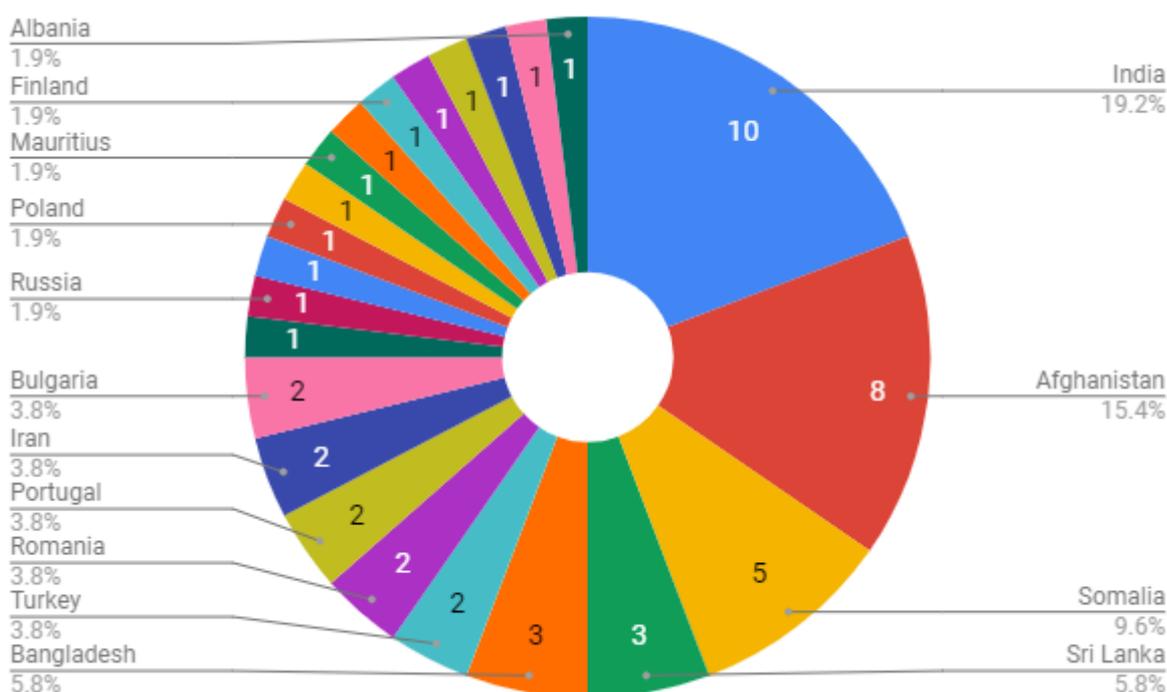
All the above helped to maximise participation of third country national Hillingdon residents and the achievement of the project targets.

#### 4.0 Participant profile

Most participants on the project were women (n=60) between the ages of 21 and 53.

Majority of the participants on the project were from the Indian subcontinent. Other countries included Turkey, Iran, Ethiopia, Poland, Russia, Bangladesh, etc. This mix largely reflects the demographics of the Hillingdon borough where the project was delivered.

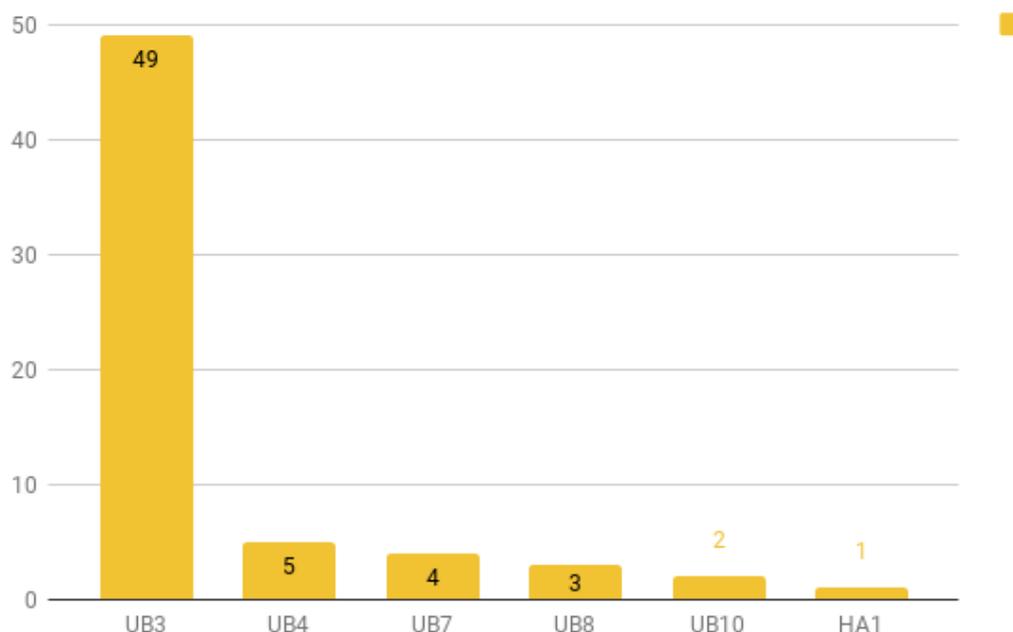
##### Country of origin distribution





49 participants lived in UB3 with the others coming from other parts of Hillingdon.

#### Postcode distribution



## 5.0 Impact analysis

To measure the overall impact of this project on the participants in relation to their language skills as well as the development of 'soft skills' (e.g. ability and confidence to independently organise own learning, access information, etc.), we analysed data pertaining to exam pass rates, test performance as well as participant responses to a distance travelled questionnaire. Additionally, this project piloted the use of personal goal books and feedback on their use by participants was also collected.

Analysis of the data shows that the project had a positive impact on the participants. Students' language skills improved. Students improved their knowledge of the English language scoring on average 78% on their tests and passing their final exams. In all 61 (95%) students successfully passed their exams.

Attendance in the classes generally has a virtuous circle effect on ESOL learners. As their language skills improve so is the participants' confidence to use it more in a wider range of circumstances. Participants experience personal



growth as their confidence, self-esteem, and a sense personal empowerment improves. This gives them more control over key aspects of their lives and allows them to integrate better into their communities.

This was clearly evident in the classes offered through this project.

As mentioned above, to test the change in the participants’ confidence, attitudes, etc., we asked them to complete a distance travelled questionnaire. Participants were asked questions relating to their confidence in using English or their ability to function independently in daily and more official situations. Other questions related to their ability to learn independently outside of the classroom, forming friendships and their use of the internet to access information or to practise English.

Overall, we collected 60 responses from the participants. Generally, participants reported a positive change on all measures.

It was clear from the responses that participants’ confidence in using English improved. Over 94% agreed or very agreed with the **statement ‘I am confident in using English’** compared to 14% at the beginning of their programmes.

**Q: I am confident in using English**

	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Beginning of the course	10.71% 6	37.50% 21	37.50% 21	10.71% 6	3.57% 2	56	2.59
End of the course	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	5.36% 3	53.57% 30	41.07% 23	56	4.36

This confidence led to **better integration** of participants as they were more likely to interact with others in their communities, e.g.:

*“Before this course I felt hesitation in speaking English but now I can interact more with people. This is because we spoke in our classes with each other.”*

*“Now I don't get scared to talk English to others.”*

*“When I go shopping I can speak English.”*



In a small way the programme has also had an impact on the wider community and has contributed to improving **community cohesion** in Hillingdon. The emphasis on learner autonomy resulted in the participants making friends with their peers in order to practise English outside of the class. 100% of the participants reported having friends to practice English with at the end of the course, compared with 39% at the beginning.

**Q: I have friends to practise English with**

	1 YES	2 NO	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Beginning of the course	38.89% 21	61.11% 33	54	1.61
End of the course	100.00% 55	0.00% 0	55	1.00

*“I made new friends on the course. I have more friends than before.”*

*“Now I found a lot of friends to speak English with them.”*

In addition to making new friends with their peers, some participants also reported making friends with their neighbours, e.g.:

*“I practise my English with my friends. I have friends where I live. I didn't speak with them. Now I speak with them every day.”*

*“We made friends with our English neighbours. They invited us to a barbecue!”*

Participants were more likely to access the Internet to practise English. 98% confirmed that they practised English online compared with 31% at the start of their programmes.

**Q: I practise English online**

	1 YES	2 NO	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Beginning of the course	30.91% 17	69.09% 38	55	1.69
End of the course	98.18% 54	1.82% 1	55	1.02

Some participants had already used the Internet to practise English. The course, however, expanded their awareness of available resources:



*“I did practise English online at the beginning of the course but now our teacher introduced us new online groups and websites which we use to improve English.”*

The opportunities provided by this programme resulted in an increase of language use outside of the class. At the end of their programmes, 100% of the participants reported using English every day (44% at the beginning).

**Q: I use English every day**

	YES	NO	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Beginning of the course	43.64% 24	56.36% 31	55	1.56
End of the course	100.00% 55	0.00% 0	55	1.00

Moreover, the duration of their interactions in English **increased** from more or less than 30 minutes a day (84%) at the start of the course to more or less than 1 hour (83%) at the end.

**Q: How much English do you use every day?**

	1 LESS THAN 30 MINS	2 MORE THAN 30 MINS	3 LESS THAN 1HR	4 MORE THAN 1HR	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Beginning of the course	65.45% 36	18.18% 10	5.45% 3	10.91% 6	55	1.62
End of the course	1.82% 1	14.55% 8	27.27% 15	56.36% 31	55	3.38

*“I used to speak English less before this course but now I can speak a little but more, more!”*

*“I didn't use much English at the start but now with the help of this course I try my best to speak more English with people.”*

*“I used to speak English less before this course but now I can speak a little but more, more!”*

Other tangible results of improved confidence in using English include ability to make appointments, answer phone calls from unfamiliar numbers or actively engage in group sessions, e.g.:



*“Now I can speak on the phone or make appointments.”*

*“Nowadays I go to toddler sessions and I respond with confidence of using English”*

93% of participants (compared to 10% at the start) reported that they are more independent and can function better in the society.

**Q: I can function well in this society. I can do things on my own, e.g. go to the GP, talk to my children’s teacher**

	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Beginning of the course	16.67% 10	31.67% 19	41.67% 25	8.33% 5	1.67% 1	60	2.47
End of the course	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	6.67% 4	43.33% 26	50.00% 30	60	4.43

Participants reported a greater sense of **empowerment** and **dignity** as their ability to function independently in society improved.

*“Now I can go to the GP alone. I can explain my problem to them easily. Before this course I couldn't go to the doctor without a person who helped me in speaking English.”*

*“Yes, I can do many things on my own. Speak to my GP and talk to my teacher and speak to my friend. I am confident now.”*

*“Before the course I have problem speaking but now I improved. I went to the GP by myself two, three times. I made appointments by myself!”*

*“Now I have more confidence to talk to my GP, talk to my children's teacher and other people.”*

*“I'm going parents meetings and talk to teachers with confidence.”*

*“I can go outside alone to bring medicine and I can speak with people.”*

In addition to this, participants had an opportunity to improve their knowledge of where to find information in relation to housing, benefits, etc. Their



responses indicate that 82% of them were aware of where to find information relating to the above as opposed to 17% at the beginning of the course.

**Q: I know where to get help with housing, benefits, childcare.**

	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Beginning of the course	21.67% 13	30.00% 18	31.67% 19	13.33% 8	3.33% 2	60	2.68
End of the course	0.00% 0	5.00% 3	13.33% 8	35.00% 21	46.67% 28	60	4.23

*“At the beginning of the course I didn't know much about the websites relating to help but now our teacher told us about websites from where we can get help in any need.”*

More participants (80%) also learnt how to look for work on-line.

**Q: I know how to look for work on-line.**

	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Beginning of the course	25.00% 15	25.00% 15	28.33% 17	18.33% 11	3.33% 2	60	2.50
End of the course	0.00% 0	8.33% 5	11.67% 7	35.00% 21	45.00% 27	60	4.17

## 6.0 Online learning

Online learning played an important part in this project and led to exceptionally good and note-worthy results. The main focus was on ensuring that learners have both the knowledge of online resources and the skills to use them. To this end the project blended traditional classroom teaching with live online conversation classes enabling learners to ‘top up’ their weekly classes with live online sessions. This offered learners more opportunities to practise their English skills without the additional need to travel, which proved particularly useful during the cold spell when a lot of the venues were closed due to treacherous road conditions.

Through learning how to access online classes, learners on this project were able to develop skills and autonomy to independently pursue other learning opportunities, essential for the digitally enhanced economy of today.



There are a large number of learning resources available online for language learners that don't cost a penny. The BBC and the British Council both have fantastic online English learning platforms that many learners don't know about.

Exposing learners to the world of online learning allowed teachers to raise students' awareness of these resources and the wealth of learning opportunities they provide. In the long term, when their language skills improve, they'll be able to expand their knowledge of English by pursuing their other interests not necessarily within the realm of learning English.

Some of the impact of online learning has already been mentioned above, e.g. 98% confirmed that they practised English online compared with 31% at the start of their programmes. This increase was largely due to learners' greater confidence in using the internet and better knowledge of available online resources (88% and 83% respectively versus 33% and 25% at the start of their programmes).

**Q: I am confident using the internet**

	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Beginning of the course	11.67% 7	21.67% 13	28.33% 17	25.00% 15	13.33% 8	60	3.07
End of the course	1.67% 1	3.33% 2	6.67% 4	20.00% 12	68.33% 41	60	4.50

**Q: I know where to access websites to support my English.**

	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Beginning of the course	21.67% 13	23.33% 14	31.67% 19	23.33% 14	0.00% 0	60	2.57
End of the course	0.00% 0	1.67% 1	15.00% 9	26.67% 16	56.67% 34	60	4.38

Online learning also addressed social isolation of some learners. A large number of the participants were stay at home mums and dads - a group which is often quite isolated due to childcare commitments. The online element, including the live sessions, addressed this barrier by enabling them to attend classes from the comfort of their homes.



*“For me the online course is very good because I stay home with my daughter and I don't speak English and with this course can I speak and learn.”*

There is another advantage of online delivery. Running classes online not only increases learners' exposure to the language but also equips them with a valuable life tool. It breaks their isolation by enabling them to keep in touch with their peers and thus ensure a certain continuity of the class. This gives them an ongoing opportunity to practice English, as they continue to stay in touch after the course. For example, on our project learners were seen exchanging information ranging from language learning websites to recipes.

For one learner in particular, online classes created an opportunity to keep in touch with her friends and practise English when she relocated to Edinburgh.

*“When I first moved to Scotland I feel sad, no friends. Fortunately I got a message from the teacher about online classes. They are very useful. It's a chance to enhance my English.”*

They were also the only option for her to continue to practise English:

*“There are Esol classes in Edinburgh in library. I wanted to join but I don't have time to join those classes they are too far plus my child is too small.”*

## **7.0 Online and classroom learning facilitators**

This project also offered an opportunity for 10 individuals to develop their skills as Classroom and Online Learning Facilitators. The facilitators, once trained, were able to support the project delivering online sessions. However, the impact of this training has had a more lasting effect that reaches beyond the project. Of the 10 individuals trained 3 have delivered online lessons and 6 have delivered training as volunteers in a range of community settings.

The course has benefited them by giving them the confidence and skills to run their own sessions both online and in the community:

*“The IFLOC course that I took in autumn 2017 with Marcin has had an overall positive influence on my teaching skills. It has given me the tools*



*and the confidence to improve my performance in the class as a teacher and session leader. Therefore I am now able to deliver clearer and more structured content to my students, who have consequently benefited from my newly acquired teaching techniques and different and varied approaches to delivering the session.”*

*“I also found out how an English lesson can be delivered online. This new experience gave me confidence to use my IT skills and opened up new ideas to make teaching and learning fun, interactive and suitable to their ability level.”*

*“I feel that I am now well equipped and ready to run an English Group in Hillingdon and/or to deliver lessons online.”*

## **8.0 Goal books**

Also noteworthy is the application of goal setting methodology in some of the classes. This was done in the form of a goal book – a diary in which participants recorded their course and weekly learning goals. Participants had an opportunity to review their goals and set new ones on a weekly basis. The intention was for participants to set themselves three objectives each week over and above their coursework that would relate to and bring them closer to achieving their course goals and to allow them to practise English in a meaningful and relevant way.

Setting goals was beneficial in a number of ways. For example, in the classes where learners were asked to write their goals, they reported an increase in the amount of time they spent on practising their language skills outside of the classroom. Writing down goals gave them a focus and served as a reminder to practise. Goals were motivating and encouraged self-discipline.

*“I knew that if I set myself a goal to learn new words, I had to do it.”*

Writing weekly goals allowed them to manage their time better in order to ‘fit in’ language practice:

*“I found [writing goals] useful. It motivates me to utilise the time in a useful way and also I’ve got a target to achieve.”*



*“When we write goals we remember to do them and we study in time.”*

Goals motivated participants to study more by directing their effort and focus:

*“Setting goals motivated me that I have to do something. This goal book gave me a clear direction to improve English.”*

They enabled learners to take responsibility for their own learning and think creatively about identifying opportunities to practise English in their own environment (e.g. in the community or at home).

*“Writing my own goals motivated me to use more English because sometimes I made goals like ‘I will do a conversation about some topics with my husband.’”*

*“In Ramadan I invited my Afghan friend who knows English very well to read Quran every day. But my main goal was to practise English with her. I already read Quran every day myself!”*

Thinking about goals on a weekly basis also encouraged self-reflection and evaluation of learners’ own strengths and weaknesses, as exemplified in the words of another student:

*“I use English as much as possible but being in the course and writing the goals down made me aware to focus and concentrate on the grammar and how to speak clearer.”*

For some learners, writing personal goals meant that they achieved things they had never thought possible. For them, articulating written goals was a genuinely emancipatory experience. Thinking about goals allowed them to focus on things that are important, personal and meaningful: the act of writing them down meant that they committed to acting upon them. Many of the things mentioned above such as engaging in an unassisted official conversation on the phone in English or visit a GP without the need for an interpreter were, in fact, written as personal goals.

### **Conclusion:**

The Integration, Employability and Social Cohesion Project can be adjudged to have successfully achieved its objectives.



Action West London delivered the project in a very flexible and innovative way, responding to the needs of participants and shaping the project to respond to requirements as the project developed in order to deliver the key objectives and targeted outputs effectively.

It has made a significant contribution to community cohesion in the Borough of Hillingdon.

It can be argued that projects such as this play an important part in integrating individuals from different countries and from different faiths into UK society.

These results could be replicated in other areas where there are high numbers of individuals with ESOL and integration needs and where there is a need for increased community cohesion.

**Acknowledgements:**

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