

AN EVALUATION OF THE RURAL REFUGEE NETWORK'S ESOL PROVISION FOR UKRAINIAN REFUGEES IN HAVANT

(February to June 2024)

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Rural Refugee Network (herein RRN) has worked across East Hampshire and the Havant communities since 2016, assisting refugees to settle into new communities. In order to support their transition to independence, RRN helps individuals and families find accommodation, training, education, and employment, and engages with fundraising and awareness activities in the local area. Previous (and continuing) initiatives include a 1:1 Employment and Education Programme, the South Downs Youth Discovery Project, and, since Summer 2022, English-language support through bespoke ESOL courses. This report aims to evaluate the impact of the ESOL course provided for Ukrainian refugees in Havant in 2024.

RRN's bespoke ESOL support programmes were created in response to the arrival of refugees from Ukraine in summer 2022. It was estimated that more than 8 million people had fled their homes for safety in other countries by February 2023 (UNHCR, 2024). As of July 2023, more than 6.5 million refugees from Ukraine have been recorded globally, 400 of whom are in East Hampshire (UN Refugees, 2024). With previous experience in providing ESOL support for refugees, RRN had the capacity to respond to the immediate need of these individuals for language learning support. Evaluations of RRN's pilot ESOL programme for Ukrainian refugees in July 2022 found that students experienced improvements across all language skills, a greater sense of community belonging, and strong desire for further provision. ESOL provision in Autumn 2023 saw similar improvements across the learners ' confidence, competence, and wellbeing, with strong desire for future provision.

The RRN was awarded a generous grant in February 2024 by Havant Borough Council to continue their provision of beginner ESOL classes to Ukrainian refugees. Classes lasting 2 hours ran once a week from the end of February to the end of June 2024. As the second beginner ESOL class for Ukrainian refugees in Havant, most of the learners had attended the RRN's previous provision and were therefore building on existing skills. However, new learners arrived through the term who had been unable to register for English language provision at Havant South Downs College. Each class was held at the Pallant Centre in Havant and by Hilary Wright, a specialised ESOL teacher who has considerable experience working with refugees. The classes were structured around the 'English for Everyone 'course, and also benefitted hugely from the presence of the Teaching Assistant Sabina Rashkovska, an English CELTA certified teacher from Ukraine.



2. THE EVALUATION

This evaluative report intends to capture the impact of RRN's ESOL provision on learners in Havant. The report will be used to reflect on this provision and inform the future provision of similar programmes.

2.1 Research questions

This report will measure the outcomes of the Havant ESOL course across two key outcomes:

- 1. Improved confidence and competence across all four language skills. (Less focus will be placed on writing).
- 2. Improved wellbeing, confidence, and belonging in the class and the community.

We will also consider the efficacy of the design, planning, and delivery of the ESOL provision, asking what worked well and what could be better. This will involve evaluation of the outings organised by Sabina. The organisation of the outings will be described in Section 3; the classes in Section 4.

2.2 Methods and sources

Progress in learning was assessed through teacher and student perceptions. Hilary provided a written report assessing the impact and process of the classes from her perspective. The learners each undertook a survey so their responses could be collected in a consistent format. 7 learners completed this in total. These surveys are contained in the appendices of this report. Students were asked to:

- 1. Rate on a Likert-like scale the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements about planned outcomes.
- 2. Comment on the teaching and outings, including what worked well and how provision could be improved.

Furthermore, Sabina provided five written reports on the outings and First Aid Course organised for the students. This will provide Sabina's perspective on the learners 'development and experience.

The participation of the organisers and teachers in this evaluation will ensure that the findings will actively inform future funding bids and the detail of provision, and help the teachers to understand where they are at their best and build on the best of what they do. This research took an appreciative enquiry approach, which 'aims to identify good practice, design effective development plans, and [...] offers an affirmative approach for evaluating and envisioning future initiatives based on best practice ' (NFER, 2009, p.2).

The dataset overall comprised:

- 1. 7 questionnaire responses
- 2. Feedback from the teacher
- 3. Feedback from teaching assistant on the outings



3. THE OUTINGS

As a new element of RRN's ESOL provision, a section will be dedicated to outlining the structure and organisation of the outings. These outings were aimed to help the learners practise the vocabulary they had specifically learned in the session, engage with key aspects of life in the UK in protected environments, and gain confidence in their own abilities. Several learners referred to them as "practical classes" in the surveys, implying the usefulness and educational value the learners believed them to bring to RRN's overall provision.

The first outing introduced learners to a local café, Poppins Café and Restaurant, on North Street in Havant. Held on Thursday 21st March, Sabina helped the students practise the relevant vocabulary and then encouraged them to order a meal and drinks independently. She reports that "at the end of the session each of them could ask for the bill and pay for extra food communicating with the waiter, who was helpful, patient and extremely attentive, on their own".

The students then visited the Havant Library at the Meridian Centre on Thursday 2nd April 2024. The students began with the practical tasks of registering for the library, understanding how to access the services and use facilities such as the printers. Sabina noted that this guided experience was important because "libraries in the UK are completely different from ones in Ukraine" so "the students benefit from a lot of possibilities how they could use the library space". The learners had a chance to use the computers, an experience relatively unfamiliar to many due to their age and the occupation. This chance to develop an important skill for life in the UK was welcomed by the learners.

The third outing took place on Thursday 9th April and involved a visit to the Museum in the Spring Arts and Heritage Centre in Havant. Four learners spent the morning at the museum following a visit to the library where they practised the relevant vocabulary. At the museum, the students learnt about the history of the town and its inhabitants. This was enabled by the museum exhibits, the recreation of a 1950s kitchen, and a visit to the Memorial Wall near St Faith's Church.

Next, an outing was arranged to the Horizon Leisure Centre, Civic Centre Road, in Havant on 28th May. 5 students attended this outing. Prior to the trip, the class reviewed vocabulary related to the gym, which had been planned specifically to support the structure of the outing. A tour of the leisure centre was provided by Michael Whitelock from the centre's Customer Relations team, as well as an explanation of the centre's facilities, membership options, and visiting procedures. Based on prior agreement, the learners were then able to enjoy a free hour at the swimming pool. Many expressed "great interest" in visiting the leisure centre again and were "happy and extremely grateful for the opportunity" provided by the Horizon centre and the outing.

The final outing on Thursday 13th June, attended by 6 students, aimed to introduce them to the local transport system. This was facilitated by Lucy Lomax, a Transport Liaison volunteer who travelled from Petersfield to deliver the session. In order to improve the learners 'confidence in this setting, they were provided the opportunity to speak to the ticket office staff, use the station infrastructure, and learn about the types of tickets available. They experienced using the ticket machine to buy tickets, as well as the app 'Trainline'. Subsequently, they went to the bus station to learn about routes, timetables, and regulation of travel. The learners also were able to speak to the staff and bus driver. This outing was also positively received.

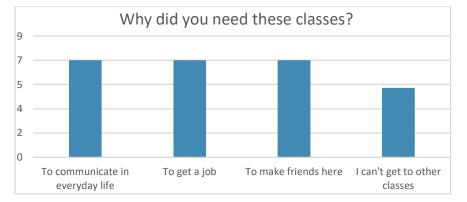


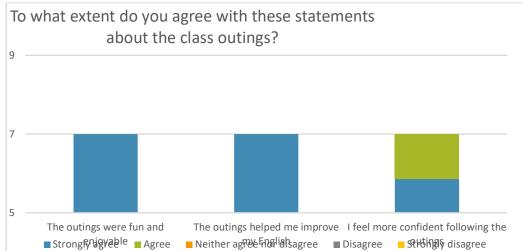
Alongside the outings, a First Aid Course was held on May 20th in the Pallant Centre in Havant. The First Aid course, funded through Community First, gave an opportunity "to learn new vocabulary, relevant and useful phrases, and new practical skills". The course "aroused great interest among the participants", according to Sabina, and learners gave positive feedback following its completion, including that "the course met their expectations and needs" and that "the material was easy to follow". Sabina reports that "they willingly and with great interest practised the skills". They also praised the quality and administration of the course.

The impact that these experiences had on the learners in relation to the aims of this report will be discussed in more detail below. Overall feedback on the outings from the learners can be summarised with the following quotes taken from the learner surveys:

- "These outings were very useful. I hope they will be continued in the future"
- The outings "are extremely useful as they let me improve my English and develop my skills"

Learner feedback overall labelled the outings as a "splendid idea" and said they were delivered in a way that was "very practical and close to life". This is corroborated by the learner surveys, in which 100% of the learners 'Strongly agreed 'that "the outings were fun and enjoyable" and "the outings helped me improve my English".







4. THE CLASSES - PROCESS

This section reviews the teachers 'reports and the learner feedback to examine the organisation and structure of the classes. This can help us understand which aspects of the course were considered especially important by the learners, and which therefore can be considered meaningful in delivering the results discussed below. In general, the learners agreed that the content and structure of the classes were appropriate and effective, and the course as a whole was well organised. One noted "I think that all the information is very useful and necessary", while another stated "I liked the format of the lessons".

4.1 Teacher approach

The learner surveys offered much positive feedback on Hilary's teaching skills and approach. Her use of body language, games, visual and audio material, and drawings were especially praised. The students appreciated how these were used to explain "tough and difficult things...which was very helpful". Hilary's explanations were described as "accessible", "understandable", and "clear", and were enhanced by Hilary's energetic use of other materials and methods when extra support was needed. All learners 'Agreed strongly 'that the teacher listened to them and responded to what they needed. One learner emphasised that they wished "to continue studying English at these courses with the same teachers".

4.2 Class resources

The course followed the English For Everyone Level 1 coursebook. Each learner was provided with a copy of the text for use in the classes and at home. Hilary also provided photocopied worksheets and supplementary materials, including downloadable audio files. Many learners mentioned that this provision was "necessary and helpful" and that "the material was easy to follow". Another type of resources commented on by the learners was the range of reading material including books which learners could borrow to practise at home. One learner noted that this provision helped her "get the details better", suggesting that this was important to the development of their reading skills. Another emphasised that these books and other independent tasks were important for their learning. A final resource to be mentioned is the WhatsApp group chat created to enable learners to ask questions, for additional learning questions to be offered, and for information to be shared.

4.3 Learning Atmosphere

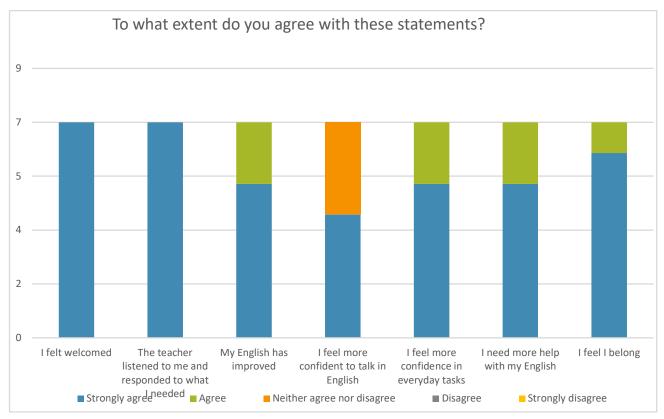
The course was designed to be learner directed, with the pace of the course as flexible and adaptive to their needs and requests as possible. Hilary wrote that, "all learners clearly appreciated the personalised nurturing and encouraging approach of the class", corroborated by all the learners 'Agreeing strongly 'when asked whether they felt welcomed in the lessons. The learners also praised the atmosphere of the classes, for example stating that Hilary "created a positive, relaxing atmosphere". This atmosphere was sustained in the outings and the first aid course, where the trainer used elements of humour and careful demonstrations to encourage the learners. Sabina notes that during the first outing (to a local café), "the students acted as a team, helping and supporting each other".

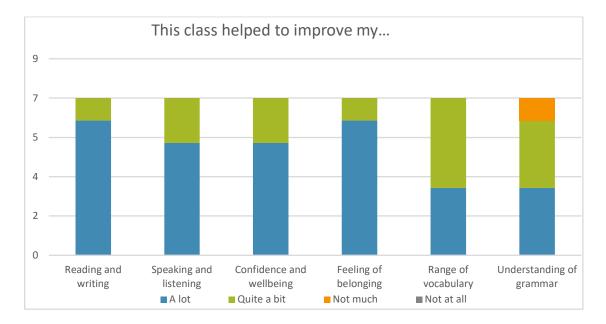
4.4 Teaching assistant

Hilary and the learners both emphasised the importance of Sabina's support with translation, transcription, and simple grammar explanations. Hilary noted that "transcription from Sabina was especially valuable for the group's beginner level", and five out of seven learners mentioned her



specifically. One learner said, "everything was clear and easy to understand as we had an interpreter", while another mentioned her support specifically with helping them understand grammar.







5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results examined below are drawn from all parts of the dataset and examine the perception of students and stakeholders in relation to this evaluation's Intended Outcomes (Section 2.1).

5.1 Confidence and competence in language skills

All students agreed that their English had overall improved as a result of the classes, 5 strongly. As mentioned above, 7/7 learners agreed that the outings helped them improve their English, suggesting that these "practical classes" were an important element in the course's success.

5.1.1 Speaking and listening

The evidence provided suggests that the learners showed considerable improvement in ability across all language skills. Hilary wrote that "the learners showed progress in all areas of English", specifically mentioning speaking and listening: "the classes really made a difference to understanding and spoken English with evidence of progress in everyday communication as they can now respond to and ask relevant questions and express their own thoughts, feelings and ideas with greater confidence". 71% of learners (5/7) reported that the classes helped them improve their speaking and listening 'A lot', with the remaining 14% said they improved 'Quite a lot'.

Reflecting on previous evaluations, the outings and the opportunity that they provided to practise speaking and listening in real-world situations seems to have made important contributions to the learners 'improvement in this provision. Sabina mentions these opportunities especially with the Leisure centre: "during the session ESOL students developed their listening...and speaking skills and felt more engaged, involved and motivated. Without a doubt, they improved their skills...speaking to the staff, who were attentive and helpful". Similarly, she writes that, at the bus station, "the students had a great opportunity to practise their speaking and listening skills, practising asking and answering questions while buying tickets, and later listening to the announcements at the stations." The outing to the library allowed the students to successfully communicate with staff on complex tasks such as using the printer or library catalogue. One of the learners wrote that the outings were "very useful" because "now I know how to communicate with people... and get the information" while another felt happy that they can now "understand the answers to [her] questions".

Speaking is an area the learners still wish to improve. Five learners included more practical speaking tasks as something they would like to see more of in future lessons. Although 4 learners agreed strongly that they felt more confident to speak in English, 3 reported that they neither agreed nor disagreed, suggesting this is an important area for future development.

5.1.2 Reading and writing

86% of learners reported that the classes helped them improve their reading and writing a lot, the rest reporting 'Quite a lot'. While the lessons put less focus on writing, the learners and teachers both noted explicit improvement in their reading. For example, learner feedback stated that having books provided for independent learning helped them improve their reading skills. Much of their feedback centred on the opportunities to practise in real situations at the outings. At the leisure centre, Sabina writes that "without a doubt, they improved their skills reading the signs and instructions inside", while at the bus and train station their "reading skills were improved while reading and understanding the signs... as well as during buying tickets from the ticket machines."



5.1.3 Grammar and vocabulary

Despite the course being designed for competence and confidence in everyday speaking situations rather than for technical skills, 6/7 learners reported that the classes improved their understanding of grammar (3 a lot, 3 quite a lot, 1 not much). One learner said that they wanted more focus on grammar in future provision. All learners responded positively when asked whether the classes helped improved their range of vocabulary, 4 'Quite a bit 'and 3 'A lot'. Each outing supported this aim, by enabling independent and exploratory use of new vocabulary in a range of local settings.

5.2 Wellbeing

The classes also had a positive effect on the learners 'wellbeing. Hilary's report stated, "many learners demonstrated good self-rated health and wellbeing during the classes, laughing, smiling and physically demonstrative with hugs and firm friendships formed". All learners were motivated to join the course by a desire to make friends, suggesting that this feeling of belonging and community was meaningful to them. The feeling of community within the class can be expected to improve their overall wellbeing. Overall, 5/7 learners reported that their confidence and wellbeing were improved by the classes.

Sabina's evaluation of the outings suggests that the first aid course was especially beneficial to the learners 'wellbeing as it gave them "the opportunity to make a difference... gain new knowledge... [and] refresh skills acquired before". The resulting feelings of agency and progress supported the learners wellbeing. A learner's comment that, because of the First Aid course, "I think I wouldn't be confused or frustrated in the situation where somebody needs help", suggests a sense of accomplishment that supports this. The everyday outings allowed the learners to explore new settings in a supported way, offering them a sense of achievement, which is positive for wellbeing. In general, Sabina concludes that "without a doubt, [the museum outing] affected [the learners'] wellbeing and they had positive emotions". This was partly facilitated by the opportunity the outing provided for the students to bond as a group.

Hilary's reflection on the learners 'sense of belonging states that "all learners felt welcomed and new learners were supported whenever they joined the course". 86% of learners said that their feeling of belonging improved 'A lot 'due to the classes, with one learner responding, 'Quite a lot'. 6/7 agreed strongly with the statement 'I feel I belong', with the final learner agreeing moderately. Although the question did not specify whether this sense of belonging referred to the classroom setting or their general experience, the survey and reports used for this evaluation suggest it can be assumed to apply to both.

5.3 Confidence and belonging outside the classroom

This feeling of confidence extended beyond the classroom. Hilary's report notes several of the ways that the learners felt a positive sense of belonging: "they can ask and understand directions, order coffee and cake in a café, know how to buy train and bus tickets, [and] use the local Library and Leisure Centre". She also mentioned that they are more able to ask for help when needed. The learners also responded positively when asked about their confidence. 6 strongly agreed that the classes helped them feel more confident (1 agreed), and 5 strongly agreed that this confidence had improved specifically with regards to everyday tasks (2 agreed). Hilary's report highlighted that the learners are more able to ask for help when needed, are more comfortable with travelling independently, and visit local spaces such as the pool and the shops. This is supported by the fact that a couple of the learners are now volunteering in a charity shop in Petersfield.



This evaluation suggests that the outings were especially beneficial for the learners 'sense of confidence and belonging outside the classes. Sabina's feedback from most of the outings included the learner's increasing confidence to complete a range of everyday tasks independently. She also noted that the First Aid course supported individuals in feeling able and confident to manage a first aid incident. Her summary of the leisure centre similarly emphasises this: she writes that one of the reasons the learners were "grateful and very happy" about the outing was because "based on their own words, they are completely unconfident and confused to do that by themselves". Sabina considered that the visit to the Museum allowed learners to "gain confidence in understanding life in the neighbourhood" – such historical and community-based context is beneficial to a sense of belonging.

The learners' surveys offered similar conclusions. One stated "now I am not afraid to enter the library, a café, or the station", while another reported their new confidence to shop alone based on the courses and outings. One learner stated simply that the "outings have made me feel more confident", supported by statements from other learners such as "the fear of communication has disappeared" and "I do not panic any more when I do not know what to say".

5.4 Future provision

General comments provided by the learners reported a strong desire for the classes to continue. All agreed that they needed more help with their English, 5 strongly and 2 moderately. All 6 learners who answered the question, "What do you feel you need next to help you improve your English" focused on the continuation of the courses. Similarly, consistent comments requested that more "practical tasks and outings" were included, and more speaking tasks were highlighted. This reflects both the expected desire of learners to centre this difficult skill, and the value they placed on the new addition of the outings. Fewer learners mentioned a desire for more or longer lessons than is usual for these evaluations, suggesting that the regularity of the lessons was suitable in this case for these learners.



6. CONCLUSION

Overall, this evaluation has found that the programme of RRN's ESOL provision for Ukrainian refugees in Havant during the spring and summer of 2024 was successful across its central aims. Hilary's report summarised her evaluation of the classes, which has been corroborated by the other data sources used in this evaluation:

"I feel the course has been a success, as with gentle encouragement and increased confidence, the learners have been able to develop their language skills in all four disciplines and have been exposed to topics that are relevant and interesting to them. They are now more willing to actively engage, take risks with communicating and feel more confident generally."

The learners both stated and showed improvement in their confidence and ability when using English. This applied to all four skills and both the greatest progress and the greatest preference for future focus was on speaking. The learners also reported improvements to their wellbeing, stating that they felt welcomed, found community, and found the lessons a highly positive experience. Feelings of agency, independence, and progress inferred from the outings may also be linked to wellbeing. The primary conclusion drawn from this report however was the learners 'increased confidence. This applied both to their use of English and to their ability to live independently and enjoyably in the community. Many reported general feelings of confidence, as well as specific occasions where they felt the positive effects of the classes, including taking the train alone, shopping, and ordering in shops.

Key aspects of the organisation of the course which have been found to contribute to these outcomes were the skill, energy, and compassion of Hilary's teaching, the provision of a coursebook and extra reading materials to the learners, and the presence of Sabina as the teaching assistant. Most importantly however were the six outings, which offered unprecedented opportunities for the students to practice their English and gain real-world knowledge and experience regarding life in the UK. The learners 'feedback on the outings emphasised both the improvements they felt in their English, and their greater confidence as a result of the welcome and support. It would be highly beneficial for future provision for these outings to continue.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The data in this evaluation point to the following recommendations. Some reflect ideas directly from participants, who were asked how provision could be improved, others have been inferred from the data by the researchers.

- Provision could provide greater focus on speaking.
- The outings should be continued.
- The presence of a Ukrainian teaching assistant is valuable for students.
- The availability of English language books for independent study was valuable.
- Future courses could consider providing greater focus on grammar.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND HEARTFELT THANKS

The Ukrainian students who gave their time, energy and ideas to this research, and everyone who took time out of busy lives to share their reflections. We are grateful to the teacher, Hilary Wright, for participating in this research. Thank you too to the funder Havant Borough Council Community Team and for their continuous support throughout the project.

The project would also like to highlight the contribution of:

- Rural Refugee Network volunteers, trustees and CEO.
- The support of Sabina Rashkovska, an English teacher from Ukraine who supported the sessions with translation and simple grammar explanations, and played a key role in organising the outings.
- Our admin volunteer Helen Vyner who helped throughout the project.
- The students' hosts for their support, such as helping with homework or driving their guests
- Lucy Lomax and Michael Whitelock for their generous and welcoming support of the outings.
- Poppins Café and Restaurant, Havant Library, the Museum in the Spring Arts and Heritage Centre, the Horizon Leisure Centre, and the Havant bus and train station for supporting the outings with generosity and compassion.
- The Pallant Centre for providing a venue for the ESOL provision.

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APPENDICES APPENDIX A: Questionnaire Rural Refugee Network ESOL programme, Havant. Spring 2024. Feedback survey

Thank you for helping us understand your experience of the English programme you have attended. We will use what you tell us to write a report about the programme. Your name will not be used and no one will be able to identify you in the report. This survey is run by Katherine Lawrence, an experienced evaluator and trustee of the Rural Refugee Network. If you have any questions about this survey, you can contact research@ruralrefugeenetwork.org. If you choose to provide your contact details and subsequently decide that you want to withdraw your responses, you may do so by contacting research@ruralrefugeenetwork.org

*Indicates required question

1. I have read and understood the above information and agree to participate. *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

2. Why did you need these classes?

Check all that apply.

- To communicate in everyday life
- 🕖 To get a job
- To make friends here
- I can't get to other classes

3. This class helped improve my:



Mark only one oval per row.

	Not at all	Not much	Quite a bit	A lot
Reading and writing	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc
Speaking and listening	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc
Confidence and wellbeing	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc
Feeling of belonging	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc
Range of vocab	ulary	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc
Understanding of grammar	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc



4. To what extent do you agree with these statements?

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I felt welcomed	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc
The teacher listened to me and responded to what I needed	•	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc
My English has improved	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc
l feel more confident to talk in English		\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc
l feel more confident in everyday tasks	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc
l need more help with my English	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc
I feel I belong	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc

5. What did the teacher do that helped you learn well? Can you give examples?



6.	To what extent do with these stateme the class outings?		Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
	The outings were fun and enjoyable	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc
	The outings helped me improve my English ability	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc
	I feel more confident following the outings	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc	\bigcirc

7. Do you have any other feedback about the outings?

8. Do you have any feedback about the First Aid Course (if you were able to attend)?

9. What do you feel you need next to help you improve your English?



10. What aspects of the course were most useful and valuable to you? It will help us if you explain why and give examples

11. What about the classes could be changed to improve your experience of the course?



12. Thank you for completing this form. You do not have to give your name or contact details. If you would like to provide your contact details please add your email address here. Withdrawal of anonymous responses will not be possible. Your details will not be retained once the project report is complete and will not be shared with anyone else.