**UASC Working Group Minutes 30.04.2025**

**Anne Margaret Smith (ELT Well)**

Delighted to have been asked to come and say a little bit about the assessment tool which I put together. For our multilingual learners, it's a way of identifying which of our learners might be neurodivergent which ones might just need a little bit of extra support in certain aspects of learning. And when I talk about neuro diversity, I'm talking about these fairly common neuro types. These are the most commonly identified ones you probably recognise most of these labels. Dyslexia is probably the most common one.

OK, so basically when I talk about neuro diversity neurodivergence, these are the tkinds of neuro types that I have in mind. Dyslexia obviously is the best known one, but these others, they very commonly Co occur. So sometimes somebody will say that they've been told they have dyslexia when in fact it could be some characteristics associated or more associated with the other neuro types. But it's quite hard to separate them out to be fair. So that's why the umbrella term of neurodiversity, or new neurodivergence, is actually quite helpful. So the point of the CAML is to try and identify those learners who might be neurodivergent. And I started because I was working in ESOL. I started with the one for adults, which is CAML plus, but I think probably the one which is going to be most interesting for those of us working with younger people is the young learners one and I actually also use this even with older learners who have had no formal education. So I often see people who have arrived in this country, even 10 or 15 years ago, but have had no education at all in their own first language. And they're really, really finding it hard to learn English. So the age I think is not as important as their educational background. So I would probably think that for many of our unaccompanied minors, it would be the young learners who would, which would be most appropriate. So the aim was to try and assess their cognitive function without also assessing their English language proficiency, because some of my learners actually had very little English at that time when they were newly arrived in the country, so there was no point in assessing their English. And we have lots of tools to do that. But I wanted to assess things like memory, speed of processing, all the things which as a dyslexia assessor, I would want to.

To see what was going on I wanted some qualitative data, not just a handful of numbers. I wanted something that would give me a bit more of a taller picture of what this person was doing and what was going on for them.

And I also wanted something that was going to be accessible for classroom teachers and not just learning sport stuff and not just qualified assessors, because I actually think that people who are working with young people, particularly unaccompanied new arrivals, the people who are working with them on a daily basis, are the best people to start the assessment process. People that they trust, people that they will open up to, people, that they're willing, you know, to say. Yeah, actually it's always been like this for me or actually, no this only started in the last few months so. It's something which I hope is accessible for teachers, support workers, anybody that's working with, with young people. There are, of course, culture and linguistic differences we know about that. And unfortunately, a lot of the tools that we have for assessing either language proficiency or assessing cognitive function, our dyslexia assessment tools, they don't take that into account. A lot of our young people are just not used to taking assessments. They're not used to sitting and doing formal assessments and standardised tests, unfortunately will not really be very helpful for this group of people, because we're working with a very, very diverse population. So who are we going to standardise it on so the CAML is not standardised, it is holistic, qualitative. It's really about finding out what's going on with that person rather than giving them number and saying, oh, they're below average in this or whatever. Communication is also an issue. There are ways around that, of course. I think anyone who's working with new arrivals understands that the communication issues, they go beyond just having an interpreter. Just having an interpreter is really helpful, but it's not the full story. So that's something that we need to keep in mind as well. So in terms of deciding whether young people may have a cognitive difference like dyslexia, or they may be autistic, or they may have ADHD, there are lots of things that we need to consider. We need to think about their background, obviously. We need to know what kind of experiences they've had. We need to know if they've had the chance to develop any literacy. We need to look at their memory, their speed of processing, their phonological processing, because that will definitely affect how they succeed in learning English. And the student background and I've said that twice because it's so important. It's the most important thing that we need to find out about. And I know sometimes that's difficult. Sometimes these young people don't want to go back over what's happened to them. Sometimes they just don't know. They don't have any recollection of their earlier life. It can be quite difficult to get that background, but we need to get as much information as possible.

So in terms of the assessment process, it starts with observation and we're just looking for behaviours that we think are unusual and as a language teacher might be kind of mildly irritating in the classroom. Those are the students that we need to keep our eyes on. It could be anything like always turning up late. It could be falling asleep in class. It could be not waiting for their turn to talk or completely misunderstanding what people are saying. It could be anything that we think is unusual. And we just need to make a note of how often we see that, because that's how we'll start to spot the patterns and it's patterns that we're looking for. You know, one off anybody can have a bad day, but if we start to see patterns, that's going to be interesting in terms of determining if there's any form of neurodivergence there. We need to have a chat with this young person about their general situation, about how they feel about learning English or other subjects, and if we can get that background information about the early years, that would be great. That that's not always easy to find out, you know. Did they reach their milestones? They don't always know even what we're talking about there s granted, that's not easy, but as much information as possible. When we're looking at literacy, we could maybe get them to write in their first language. If they've had the opportunity to develop literacy in their first language, we would be looking for accuracy and fluency. How they kind of lay out the text and even how much they can write if we give them 10 minutes, how much could they produce? And as part of the adult CAML I have got some guidelines for that. I haven't got guidelines for the younger learners because I found that a lot of the young people actually haven't had the opportunity to develop literacy.

We may not be able to read this language. That's how it goes. Sometimes we can find somebody who would read a text for us and let us know what it looks like. But often it's kind of watching the person to see how they approach a writing task. We can get them to do some copying if they haven't had the opportunity to develop literacy, just get them to do some copying and these shapes help us to see what their pen control is like, what their spatial awareness is like, their perception. It just gives us an idea of where what their starting point is basically. Saying with reading if they can read in their first language, we could find a text and ask them to read it for us. We would be listening for fluency. Quantities. See how quickly they can read. We could maybe check their comprehension, particularly if we've got somebody who could help us with that. For somebody that we know that speaks the same language. And again, accuracy not easy to gauge unless you've got somebody that can help you with that. That shares the same language with the young person. But again, many of the young people I work with, and even the older adults that I work with, don't have any literacy practises in their first language. So instead there is a scanning task where they basically have to find these words. They're not real words, obviously not real text. It's basically matching to see if they can recognise that symbols are the same, that symbols are in the same order. It's basically looking to see if they've got the potential there to develop literacy practises. It's quite a fun task, actually.

Looking at memory. I do both auditory and visual memory. I get the student or the young person to tell me the names of some people that they know. It could be classmates. It could be people they live with. If they want to talk about family, they tell me the names I write them on to bits of card and then we do some practise. And basically what I'm doing is giving one prompt, giving one name and getting them to repeat back. Giving two get them to repeat back. Give them three. See if they can repeat back. See how long a sequence they can build up, and then we can do it backwards, get them to reverse the sequence, see what their working memory is like. Again, people usually quite enjoy that, and I even had one student actually took the cards off me and said now your turn and start testing me, that's fine. That shows, you know, a bit of initiative. And what I did as well was I got some deliberately wrong to see if they could pick up that I was getting them wrong. So it was quite an interesting addition to the task for visual memory. I use coloured shapes. So the whole point of the CAML is that they don't have to know any English. They don't have to know what these shapes are called. They don't have to know the names of the colours. They see the shapes on the screen. They have a set of shapes in their hands and then when the shapes disappear off the screen, they show me using the shapes they've got. What they remember seeing so they don't have to say anything. They don't have to use any language just to test what their short term visual memory is like. And again, people usually quite enjoy doing that. Speed of processing a couple of things that we could do, we could ask them if they know the days of the week in their own language. Often they do so you can get that list off the Internet. See if they can tell you all seven days of the week, see if they can reverse the sequence. See how quickly they can do it. That gives you a good indication of their speed of processing and their retrieval of words. The same with picture naming. So we look at the pictures and we talk about what they are. They teach me and they really like this bit. They teach me to say these words in their language. I've got quite good at Pashtu lately, but sometimes you get a new language and you're like, oh, OK. Then they see forty of these. It's the same pictures but repeated randomly, and they have to name the pictures as fast as they can. And because they've just taught me I can kind of monitor to see if they're getting them right. So that gives you an idea of how quickly they can retrieve familiar words. The speed of processing in that sense, which is quite helpful and can be quite enlightening. You know, you get some young people who can name 40 pictures in 20 seconds. It's all right and you get some who might need a minute or two minutes to name 40 pictures. It's quite slow so there's no hard and fast rules about how long it should take, but you get a sense qualitatively. You get a sense of whether it's effortful for them, whether it's just really easy and that gives you an idea of what their yeah, what their processing is like. Phonological processing, quite difficult to tap into somebody else's phonological systems. Rhythm is quite a good one. See if they can clap back a rhythm. See if they can tell you if any of the words in the the pictures that we've just named, if any of them start with the same sounds, that's quite a good one. Sometimes there aren't any, so in that case then I would just pick one picture and say you know, you told me this is you told me this is Callum. I think it's Pen. Can you tell me any other words that start with that same sound? And just see if they can tap into the individual sounds and if they can retrieve any other words that have that sound and taking away the sounds. So I would only use words that they're really confident saying. I do this in English sometimes or in their own language. Look around the room for something if they can tell me what this is, and there's usually one of these in the room. If they can tell me this is a chair, that's brilliant. If they can say it clearly and then I'll say, OK, chair, now take away the ch and see if they can give me air. Otherwise, we can use their words, so we can say Callum, take away the car. What's left? Hope they can give me lamb. Sometimes I can, sometimes I can't. We're just exploring how good they are at identifying and isolating sounds or segments of words just to get a sense of their logical processing ability. Again, there's no hard and fast scores. It's really holistic and it's really about having that conversation with the student just to see what they can do. And then after the assessment, the assessment might be done all in one day and it usually takes me about two hours to do it. If I'm doing everything all in one hit, that's quite a long time for some people to concentrate. So if you can split it up into different sessions, that's much better. But at some point, you need to bring all the information together and have a look at it because we're not looking for only one isolated area of challenge We're looking really for patterns. We're looking for things which they consistently find difficult. And just as an example, this is a the kind of summary sheet that comes with the camel and I would just cide whether the performance was better than I expected, given what I know about their background. Was it typical for a young person with this kind of background, or was it actually surprisingly not as good as I'd expected?

And then you can start to see the patterns. You can start to see is it actually the auditory aspect of language, which is a problem, or is it more the visual? Where are the patterns? Where are the challenges and when you get all the sheets sort of scored up, you can start to see, Oh yeah, they're OK at this, but this is difficult for them. And that's really how we make a judgement.

 If you have an assessor who can help you with this, you might be able to then do like a more formal assessment. For example, if your young people are looking for access arrangements for exams, you probably need a more formal assessment, but this is a great starting point. It's great for informing teaching. It's great for informing professionals who are going to be working with them. Gives you an idea of what their memory span is like, or if they're going to need some kind of reminder or a written summary if they can read or symbols or something that's going to jog their memory to help them just gives you an idea what kind of support might be needed in terms of interpreting the results.

It's all about the background. It's all about who is this person? What experiences have had they had, what opportunities have they had, what traumas have they experienced obviously. If we don't take into account that linguistic and cultural and experiential background, we can't really interpret the data. I mean, for example, we could do an auditory memory task and then find out that actually they're wearing hearing aids and they couldn't really hear what we were saying. So. You know, it's that kind of additional information that we really need in order to understand their performances on these little tasks. You can get the CAML from the ElT Well website. There's also an online course if anybody wants to sign up for a course, you get a free CAML with the course and it just takes you through the whole process of using the CAML. You basically self study work at your own pace. Find out more information at the ELT well website.

**Janice C -**

Sort of buying into that package and what will we get out of that or will I find it all on the website?

**Anne Margaret Smith (ELT well):**

 I well, I hope it'll all be on the website, but basically if you buy a CAML you get everything you need, so you get the booklet that that sort of takes you through step by step, but you get access to the online resources so you can print off the assessment sheets as many as you need. You don't have to keep buying assessment sheets, which as a dyslexia assessor I find extremely annoying. So you once you've bought it, you've got it and you can use it as many times.

There are also videos. The videos are a bit dated now I have to say they need updating. But the videos also give you much more information and sort of talk you through a little bit as well. The course is much more sort of focused on the procedure, and there's also a case study that you can work through and that sometimes gives people a bit more confidence.

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**Surrey Virtual School and Big Leaf**

**Nadia M**

So I'm Nadia Mughal and I'm from Surrey virtual school. A couple of months ago, I was talking on this meeting group and just telling everybody that we were going to run a pilot with the support of Big Leaf. Big Leaf is a charity that work with young people who are displaced. And we had come up with a need really in Surrey that young people need some form of help with regards to relationships and sex education curriculum.

So Kate and I were at these two pilot sessions that we ran and they were fantastic, weren't they, Kate, in in the sense that we were able to share so much information. We had NHS staff there as well who had kits who were able to talk about testing. We were able to look at vocabulary, the body and the way that big Leaf ran it, I think was really lovely in the sense that they have a really great relationship with them, with the young people, because they often see them for ESOL classes and activities and they have hubs for them and they run all sorts of really fantastic experiences for them. But they have the essential thing that they do have is that relationship of trust. And they have a. You know a really great relationship with them, which helped us. Essentially, Kate, shall I pass on to you because I think you have some findings maybe to share with us and I think it's just really important to know the background of how, how you did it because you didn't just dive into it kind of going in blind. So you'd already had a session with the young people and it was about healthy eating and and healthy bodies. And then we went on to the RSE subject.

**Kayte Cable (Big Leaf)**

Sure. Hi everyone. So as Nadia says, we're charity working with displaced young people and the large majority of these are unaccompanied asylum seeking children. We we work across a number of areas, but this was one area that did concern us because we do get to know a lot of the young people quite well and we can see that it's definitely a gap in their general knowledge as they sort of re re navigate new lives over in the UK.

Our first stage was we did put quite a lot of time and effort into to writing a base paper. Because we. I want this to be able to move on across all of our projects and maybe include some of our volunteer staff as well as as others. So for us it was really important that we were all starting from the same the same, the same place really, and there's quite a lot to consider on something like this before you jump straight in. So we looked at really how we define sector as sexual health. We looked at that in terms of human rights. And the best way of creating a learning space for this subject. It could be really difficult, especially in multi community groups. We looked at the sources of advice available already in in different languages. And then we went around sort of the consideration of gender in learning spaces where what we do with women and girls, men and boys, what we do with any young trans people or LGBTQI, what do those spaces look like for them? So they feel most confident. We spent a lot of time looking into the likely scenarios of people who've been through these journeys, looking at the recent data of sexual violence, particularly around places like Libya, and for people who have been trafficked in. So one of the things we really wanted to do is make sure that we we maintained very, very safe boundaries both for the Big Leaf team and the virtual school team, but particularly for for the young people. So that was our really that was our first. That was our first step. And you know what, we're happy to share that if that's useful for anyone with also with our references, the academic references, which could also be useful for anyone else who's looking to take on this. Then we put it into three sessions. The first session was we did this within our our existing project. So these are a number of people that come to us every week. With this teaching staff, who they know well, so we started from quite an easy perspective that we knew who was coming and they knew us moving forward. This probably won't be the case. So we'll we'll have to think you know how we safely address that. But we started, as Nadia said, with a kind of a warm up where we we took a very easily approach to talking about the language around the body and health that we did that the first week and then. Got one of our male teachers to to because it was actually all male in the end. The girls that we had weren't weren't present and so we got one of our male teachers to run more casual idea about body part, sexual body parts and things like that. So by the time they arrive for the sexual health, we'd already touched on, they all knew the word penis, for example, and found that hilarious. But we'd already broken that ice. Which which felt useful. And then we we broke down the the remaining two days. The first one we looked at STIs and actual help. So body language and so the language of the body. But what? What does it mean the the STI. What what what can that do to you? How can you get STIs? What are the common St is? What do they mean by safe sex? What do they mean by unprotected sex and that was when it was really useful. Have the NHS team with us with their examples of condoms and the one one thing I keep coming back to an idea is we went into one room where the we had five 17 to 19 year olds who did not know the word condom and when we put the condoms on the table had never seen one before. So that was eye opening for us. And not something I had imagined. I am aware that these that you know they do have access to free condoms with they don't know what they are. Then you know that's that's not safe for anyone.

We were properly gob smacked about that one and we talked about what you can do if you're worried. And you know where you can go and get help. And that again using the NHS cards so they know where the clinics were at what time we found. We found that they had no idea about most Sti's apart from AIDS, and everyone to know a lot about AIDS. But it was talking about, well, what does chlamydia look like? What do genital herpes herpes look like? Yeah. And that we found the knowledge was really, really low and also there was clearly a lot of embarrassment around the idea of of sexual transmitted infections.

The second thing we did on the second week, we look more at consent. So we have run into issues where there have been so serious cases over the last six years, but we've run into more lighthearted issues where people have not understood the the code of behaviour around asking people out on dates. And you know part of big, Big Leaves main programme. We do do quite a bit where we're reaching into. The community of to schools organisations to bring young people together in one space, and what we found there is occasionally some of the boys from bigleaf are slightly overstepping the mark. Not because they were being too pushy because they weren't under standing. The sort of cultural behaviours that the those who have grown up longer in the UK, one of the things we did to break the ice was look at emojis and I honestly I learnt so much about around emojis and what they mean is really useful. Having your own teenagers. And then we talked about what consent meant, how you how you get consent, why it's so important and what are the consequences of not getting consent. Just like you make sure you get consent, is that you also have to give consent. You shouldn't feel pressured into anything at all because you know we've come across it more than once in the last year. Young people displaced young people living in hostels, being pressured by local community girls living in that hostel as well and not feeling they can talk about it because it's not manly, is it? If a woman is pressuring you and you don't mean you're not saying yes. So that was we wanted to spend a lot of time on that. Like Nadia, I felt it went really well. There are some things I would tweak I would tweak for running it again, and we're in the middle of conversations of how we tweak and how we roll it out to more people.

We don't want to trick people into attending, but we do want people to attend, so that's that's our issue. In a college setting it would be easier because people have to attend and you can tell them what they have to attend for the other we have done, which we are happy to share is we created some sort of posters about the main points of our lessons and we've had them translated.

 I totally understand that not everybody is literate in their own language, so this is not, you know, it's not. It's not perfect, but in terms of being people being able to read that information and feel that Big Leaf, for there to support them in this, we felt that was important. So if that is of any interest, let us know and we can, we can definitely share those.

**Stroud, Frazier (BELS)**

I don't know if you want to share what tweaks you'd make or you still kind of working on that and kind of discovering what those are going to be.

**Kayte Cable (Big Leaf)**

Yeah, I think I think we we put quite a lot of emphasis on what people shouldn't do and actually I'd like to come back at it from and what shouldn't be done to you as well. And I think in a way.

**Nadia Mughal**

 That was one of the points that I kind of made, didn't I, Kate? Because I felt like the young people was like, you can't do this. You can't do this. But actually, when I was sat there with them, it felt like, well, it could be the other side of the the coin as well. And this should be about consent for them as well. So what is OK for them and what they're happy to do?

**Kayte Cable (Big Leaf)**

 Yeah. I would I'd like to spend more time as well. But I don't. I don't know. I mean, we spent two days. That's quite a long time.

**Nadia Mughal**

Yeah and Kate's made us some fantastic lunch as well. And I bet you don't get that at college, but yeah, it was really it. It went ever so well. And I think in terms of, like, next steps, I think Kate's got they're going to be doing their tweaks. And I think what we would like to then do is kind of share that with our our main colleges within Surrey. So then what we would then do is go into those colleges, share these materials with them and then help them to start doing this within their college and make it part of their programme because once we've got all of these findings and we can share all this information, it just makes it more easier for them and I can give them the confidence that they need to be doing it. And in fact, there was one college locally that this did come up in one of their Ofsted inspections. So again there is a need there and I think there'll be more than willing to support this agenda.

**Kayte Cable (Big Leaf)**

The feedback we got was was very good and we're always a little bit. A little bit cautious around evaluations because we know people have a real tendency, particularly in this cohort, to tell us what they want. They think we want to hear because they're they're grateful. And so if we say, like, did you have a nice, did you have a good project, they'll give us 10. We can't do that. And that'll turn for everything. But we we sat down and talked to people over the following weeks. And actually the biggest feedback we came back is nobody ever talks to us about this.

And they don't seem to be. Unless they're really clever at covering up. They don't seem to be aware of how much porn there is out there to access.

I was trying to explain what pornography is, which would be really weird with a class of 17 year old kids who've grown up in the UK actually trying to explain. OK, well, this is what it is. And you can see it online, but they didn't seem to be accessing. They seemed really surprised. Difficult explanations I've ever had to do. To explain to these boys what a pornographic film was, especially.

**Nadia Mughal**

And what they shouldn't be watching. So they didn't get into trouble because I think that was that was where we were coming from, weren't we? It was all about protecting them to make sure that they weren't watching something that they shouldn't be. If, for example, it landed in on their phones because a lot of these young people probably haven't had Internet and phones either. So everything is so, so new, isn't it? So we were just really trying to to make sure that they knew that these things are out there.

**Kayte Cable (Big Leaf)**

One more thing is, was the idea of the age of consent when several of them came up afterwards and said that their mums or their sisters have been married at 13 or 12 and having to say very clearly that that would not be acceptable in this country without also stamping on a culture?

**Nadia Mughal**

It was done very empathetically, very sensitively. We also had another chap who is one of your volunteers and one of your old, who got some information from a local imam. So again it was very kind of empathetically done. So if anybody wanted to know, because a majority of the young people were Muslim, and if they wanted to know that kind of aspect of it, then that was also available on the day.

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**Alex and Sidrah (EMBS Community College)**

Yeah, thanks very much. It's a quick introduction. My name's Alex. I'm vice Principal and I'm joined by Sidra, who's the manager for ESOL and safeguarding lead as well. We're a small Community College. We're based in southeast Oxford in Cowley, and we kind of serve the whole of Oxford as well as those immediate areas within the immediate areas there amongst sort of like the 20% most deprived areas in in England. And you know with that you get students who are facing sort of high levels of high levels of social and economic disadvantages. Poor mental health and well-being, and we see that day-to-day, we see that in their day-to-day. So generally our study programmes target learners who have kind of previous past negative experiences of school and college or they've been school refusers. So we tend to get attract those trauma which is impacted on their learning and re engagement in education as well. And those who are new to the UK, those who you know where English is. Is a second language, or. They're new to English, and in particular unaccompanied minors, refugees and asylum seekers as well. Our values we work really hard around our values and our values are centred around well-being community and learning and you know, like we really put that into practice every day, our teachers and our staff like work really hard to develop strong connections with their learners.

So in practical terms, what that means is that we we share lunch together. So we have a hot dinner each day and we share the meal together and we encourage our encourage our staff. In fact, we don't need to really encourage us our staff to do it. They're so. So engaged with the students that, you know they're around at lunchtime at break times, they're talking to their students, so they offer, you know, a council for them in terms of that. So they they form these really strong, sort of like connections with their students. That works really well. As well as that. We kind of we we offer them new experiences. Sometimes that can just be taken ice skating or, you know, teen to cinema thought park, whatever. We get the students to engage in planning some of these days as well. So we have a culture day where they can kind of share different cultures as well, and we invite the rest of the community into that as well. So we saw some a big success with that last year. Actually it was great. We have if the meals during Ramadan, so you know, and again we engage with the Community there in kind of and that really underpins it.

The curriculum itself, at the core of it is the English and maths and. That includes some ESO qualifications, but the brunt of it is the functional skills qualifications because we find there they're more mainstream, so they're kind of that. They work better in, in the real world is our experience we do from entry level one to level 2 for the functional skills, English maths and we also do GCSE English and maths as well. And this year we've we've rolled out a sort of ESOL specific GCSE English course as well. And that works really well because one of one of the qualities with our teachers is that they're really skillful in how they deliver their lessons. They have that kind of ESOL background and they're they're kind of able to kind of fill those language gaps skills gaps and also bridge over into them, passing their exams as well with the functional skills and the GCSEs. And they do a really good job of that as well. In addition to this, we also have level 2 or we offer level 2 employability digital skills and this year we've again we've rolled out Level 3 business and health and social care and we're just in that sort of planning stage for next year and following a few years as well. And we're we're looking at you know, how can we kind of broaden that that offer again. So that in terms of the curriculum offer, I think that kind of sums it up. I'm going to hand over to Sidra now. He's going to talk a little bit more about it.

Yeah, so. What we try to do is we keep class sizes as small as we can, so usually. For the pre entry levels, there's not normally more than 10 students in a class and that gives teachers the opportunity to spend more time with students one-on-one and then we also have teaching assistants in those classes where we've identified whether there is a learner that is struggling a bit perhaps and someone can sit with them so that the rest of the class can kind of carry on a little bit and they get that extra support. At the moment we don't have any classes with more than 15. So it's really small. And we find that that works. That works best for our learners, so they don't kind of get lost in the source. We also start off with kind of less class and we build up as we go along and this kind of ties in with that idea of having enrolments all year round. So as we see you know sort of peaks and troughs of you ask especially coming into Oxfordshire where the big colleges get full really quickly in September. And there aren't any kind of spaces. What we'll do is we'll. I don't think we've ever turned anyone away, actually, to be honest, we will always find a space for them, even if it's kind of, you know, maybe they start off in a lower level than they then we probably might put them in if they're in a in a big mainstream college, and then we'll let them kind of work up as well.

We also have, I mean. Anne touched on it earlier. You know, a lot of these students really aren't suited for like assessments. So they come in and usually will have an initial assessment with them, sort of see where they are in terms of English. But actually, you know, a couple of weeks will go past and we'll realise that they're far more capable than they were on that initial day when they come in and everything's new and a bit scary. So we don't really shy away from moving students up and down as we kind of need to. We kind of keep things a little bit more fluid at the beginning.

And then some students you know, depending on their background, like you said. It's really important, like, what are their experience has been like beforehand? Have they had any access to education? How long have they been out of education? Like Alex mentioned, we've had some students, you know, you've been in British mainstream schools and haven't haven't attended like throughout the whole of COVID. And they've just not wanted to be there. So even those learners have been out of education for a really long time. So. So it's more about getting them just to come in through the door, maybe they're not comfortable in the classroom, maybe they'll just spend some time in the common room for the first few weeks, then we'll slowly coax them into a classroom. Maybe they can stay for an hour. So we yeah, that's kind of like the idea really like we try to be as holistic as possible with their needs, try to make them as comfortable as possible in the environment and don't turn them away like if they've been had a really good couple of weeks. And then you know, their attendance drops off again, like what's going on behind the scenes? Why are they suddenly not coming in? And then in those instances, we might use teachers to do some one to one outreach work with them, try to get, you know, pop round to the house and see what's going on and give them some work to do, try and encourage them back into the classroom. Some students really thrive with that approach and because of that we don't have very rigid like. Set dates and things so you know in the space of one academic year rather than saying you're going to be an entry one all year, what we'll do is we'll see how they're getting on. If they're progressing really well, they're moving quickly through the levels. We'll let them do that. We'll do the exams as and when we feel that they're ready to do them without any super strict, you know, admin process of. Their only in the end of term two or only at the end of the academic year, so I think. That really sets us apart, I think from a lot of the other provisions around.

 We get a lot of students that don't want to leave and we kind of have to, you know, we want them to. You know, be successful in the in their careers and their jobs, and we kind of have to, like, encourage them to leave this kind of, like comforting safe environment.

At the moment we have around, I'd say about 230 students enrol, so if that gives you any indication of our size and about I'd say 50% of the cohort at the moment are ESOL learners with the others being students from mainstream schools that are like either redoing their GCSE or they're trying to get their functional skills. So they can go on to further education. As you know, given our cohort as well, like all of our teachers have had good training in trauma, informed practises, kind of we understand like what you know regulation looks like in our learners and how we can engage them and keep them, keep them calm and keep them learning essentially. And we also, you know, as our needs grow, we have also been able to expand and keep growing. Which is why, you know, we've not really turned anyone away.

We just keep kind of getting bigger and making more classrooms and finding other ways to engage them, whether it's in local community centres we've done or so classes sort of in Swindon area. In other, yeah community centres within Oxford and kind of gone where the need is as well. We do have EP testing for our ESOL learners, so I mean and touched on it. They're not always designed the best for students who have English as a second language, but what they do. Give us which is what we need is those access arrangements for their exams. So you know, we've got a whole class of ESOL learners that have, you know, been tested and lots of them are now getting to use laptops in their exam. They've got extra time. So that that kind of helps those learners as well. Yeah, I think I've. But yeah, I think the main the main thing is creating a sense of community. That's what we have a lot of these learners are lacking that they are an unaccompanied asylum seekers. They don't have those wider community groups. So we kind of try and create that for them in our college, like with meals, with going out and yeah, they feel really safe and comfortable with us on the whole.

**Stroud, Frazier (BELS)**

I just wanted to follow up and ask yourselves what your plans, what the scope is for providing provisions further afield?

**Alex and Sidrah (EMBS Community College)**

I suppose for us it's like within reason, we're we're really enterprising, you know? And like, like Sidra just mentioned there. You know, we go with the need we've had. We've gone as far as Swindon so far, you know, which is a good distance away. We have staff who are basically sort of booking onshore Berkshire, that sort of area. So and we're we're just really nimble actually, you know, like getting finding a location, you know what? And then? Kind of getting something up and running. It is kind of, you know, not unusual for us and. You know within reason. You know, we're always open to it.

Just get in touch with me, you know, like and then, you know, having that initial conversation around the number of students and what the needs are. And, you know, the the location, stuff like that, normally we can be quite responsive.

Contact info:

[EMBS Community College - English and Maths Courses in Oxford and Banbury](https://www.embs.ac.uk/)

alex@embs.ac.uk

sidrah@embs.ac.uk

**Additional resources:**

https://emtas.hias.hants.gov.uk/course/view.php?id=67

This is an open access course where Hampshire county councils position statement on 'Resourcing EAL' can be found