



**ESSENTIAL DIGITAL SKILLS  
ACTION RESEARCH PROJECTS**

**FINAL REPORT ON THE EDS ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT –  
DELIVERING EDS TO ESOL LEARNERS**

**Barnsley MBC**

Barnsley MBC (2021) *Final Report on the EDS Action Research Project – Delivering EDS to ESOL Learners*.  
London: ETF.

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This resource was produced as part of the Education and Training Foundation's OTLA programme, which was funded by the Department for Education. To learn more about the OTLA programme please visit: <https://et-foundation.co.uk/supporting/professional-development/practitioner-led-development-and-research/otla/>.

For further information regarding the EDS Action Research programme and this project go to <https://ccpathways.co.uk/essential-digital-skills/>.

The programme was delivered on behalf of the Education and Training Foundation by -



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# Final report - Delivering EDS to ESOL Learners

## Barnsley MBC

This project developed visual resources and learning methods to support Entry 2 ESOL learners' understanding of instructional language, with a focus on digital terminology. Once the language barriers were removed, the tutors found that learners were surpassing expectations and confidently able to take responsibility for their own learning.

## Summary

Adult Skills and Community Learning supports the delivery of Barnsley Council's vision, addresses local priorities and supports the achievement of corporate outcomes by harnessing the transformational potential of learning. The Service maintains the key principles of supporting adults to develop skills, confidence and access to technology to be able to participate in a wider variety of learning experiences and transfer those skills to work and home-life and is committed to ensuring technology is fully embedded in the learner journey.

This project was designed to offer the Entry Level 2 ESOL learners a bespoke programme to develop their digital skills to enhance their life and work and also support the online delivery of their ESOL programme.

The learners were a small cohort of existing ESOL learners who had struggled to continue with their learning in the lockdown periods due to a lack of digital skills. The bespoke programme was developed to furnish the learners with the skills they needed to be more independent in the digital world.

The programme was designed and co-delivered by an ESOL Tutor and an ICT Tutor, who supported each other professionally and developed a rapport to be able to be each other's "critical friend". This collaboration has been the trigger in developing stronger working relationships amongst colleagues from different curriculum areas who now regularly draw on each other's expertise when required. This has supported their own professional development.

## Rationale

During the COVID-19 lockdown, low level ESOL learners struggled to effectively continue with their learning due to their limited digital skills. The Service wanted to address this issue by developing a bespoke cross-curricula essential digital skills programme for low level ESOL learners to develop their independent digital skills for use at home and prepare them for work.

The project would develop strategies to support the development and understanding of digital terminology to learners where English is not their first language. It would also improve the digital skills of the ESOL tutors and give them the confidence to embed and deliver digital skills within the ESOL provision. In the initial teaching

session, it was identified that the ESOL learners would need additional support with understanding digital terminology before undertaking their essential digital skills qualification.

Tutors within both teams had previously identified needing support when delivering to low level ESOL learners and requiring knowledge to ensure digital skills are embedded within the ESOL curriculum. The project aimed to enable both teams to work closely together to develop and share good practice and develop resources to be used in future delivery.

## Approach

The Service wanted to explore and develop relevant and engaging resources to meet the needs of the ESOL learners and promote their development in understanding digital terminology as a starting point to further develop and embed their digital skills.

The approach was to develop the use of instructional language and visual resources for learners to support their understanding of basic IT terminology and how it underpins the development of the practical action.

The planned activities supported the learners to access their own Google Docs accounts and be able to document their own reflections/progress in relation to their journey of developing essential digital skills.

The proposed activities were designed to support a positive learner experience, to develop the curriculum offer that progresses the knowledge and skills that the ESOL learners will need in order to take advantage of the opportunities that prepare them for their next stage and develop their confidence in using digital technologies.

The activities would support learners to build on previous learning and develop the new digital knowledge and skills they need. It was important that the foundation building blocks of gaining the knowledge and understanding of using correct digital terminology is embedded in the learners' long-term memory and they have the confidence to use them fluently and consistently. From these activities there is a clear progression to essential digital skills which all the learners will have the opportunity to develop those skills as their next steps in their digital skills learning. This initial course enabled the learners to gain the skills, knowledge and confidence to explore progressing onto the essential digital skills provision.

The tutors worked collaboratively in developing a glossary of terms with the ESOL Tutor being a "critical friend" and supporting the ICT Tutor to pitch the resource at a level suitable for the learners.

The tutors contributed to a Padlet on a weekly basis to document their reflections and achievements within each of the sessions.

## Professional learning: Evidence of changes in teaching, learning and assessment practices

This project aimed to increase staff confidence in working with low level ESOL learners and developing their digital skills to support them in their ESOL course. The tutor reflections on the Padlet provided evidence of a significant rise in confidence when working with low level ESOL learners and having the ability to prepare resources suitable for the level of the learner. Importantly, the ESOL tutor is also more confident in embedding digital technology within her provision.

A glossary of terms was produced with the tutors working collaboratively to agree a final product to meet the learning needs of the learners. The development of the glossary went through three amendments, the images are shown below. At each revision version, the ESOL Tutor gave constructive feedback on how the resource could be adapted to benefit and better support the learners. This supportive and collaborative approach ensured the resource developed the learners understanding of the digital terminology. The ESOL tutor commented how she supported the ICT Tutor to develop this learner resource to support the learners' understanding of key terminology:

*"The use of visual aids such as images, shared screen, demonstrations, videos, glossary are essential to support learners' understanding of the spoken language. The course requests learners to take actions using many different verbs: click, double click, open, tab, scroll, etc. Knowledge and understanding of the terms is essential to be able to take the correct action."*

Glossary	
Word	Definition
Accessibility	The ease of use of a device, an application or content by a user.
Application	A program designed for a specific purpose, such as word processing or graphic design.
Attachment	A file (or files) attached to an email or other form of electronic communication by the sender, and which can be read by the recipient.
Authentication	In the context of computer systems, authentication is a process that ensures and confirms a user's identity.
Browser	An application used to find and display information on the World Wide Web.

Figure 1: Version 1 of the Glossary

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS


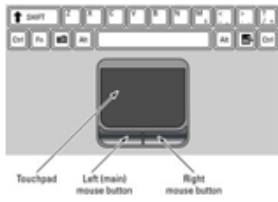


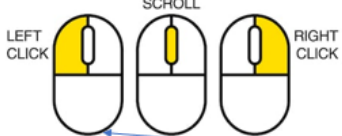
 <p>Click or tap your mouse</p>  <p>Double click or tap your mouse</p>	<p>This phrase means that you need to click or tap your mouse once, at the <u>left hand</u> side, using your finger.</p> <p>Click or tap your mouse twice (2 times) at the <u>left hand</u> side, very quickly</p>
<p>Scroll up</p>  	<p>Use the middle wheel on your mouse OR the touchpad to move your page up.</p> <p>Use the middle wheel on your</p>


Figure 2: Version 2 of the Glossary

## MOUSE

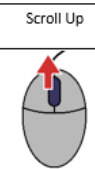


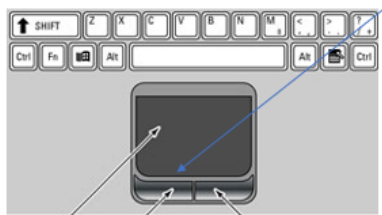
Always LEFT CLICK ONCE unless told otherwise

Scroll Down




Scroll Up





Touchpad  
Left (main) mouse button  
Right mouse button



Scroll Up or Scroll Down

Write down a description of just one of the pictures

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Figure 3: Final Version of the Glossary

Both tutors have developed their use of breakout rooms in their teaching sessions, which enabled more individual support to learners. The tutors indicated they will use this function more extensively within their teaching.

The introduction of this project has allowed the Service to review and reflect on the way communication takes place with ESOL learners in all curriculum areas. The Service will develop a mentoring support scheme to enable tutors in all curriculum areas to work with the ESOL team to develop resources suitable for all learners. The ESOL tutors have been keen to share ideas and good practice with colleagues throughout the Service and share best practice when preparing resources or communicating with learners.

The project enabled opportunities for co-facilitation, with an ESOL and digital specialist teaching together, resulting in hands-on sharing of good practice and development of the skills and knowledge of both tutors.

The project has allowed the Service to identify a renewed emphasis on cross-curricula teaching to support the development of all learners.

Teaching materials and resources, that have been used to support this sharing of good practice, were shared on a Padlet (see Appendix 3).

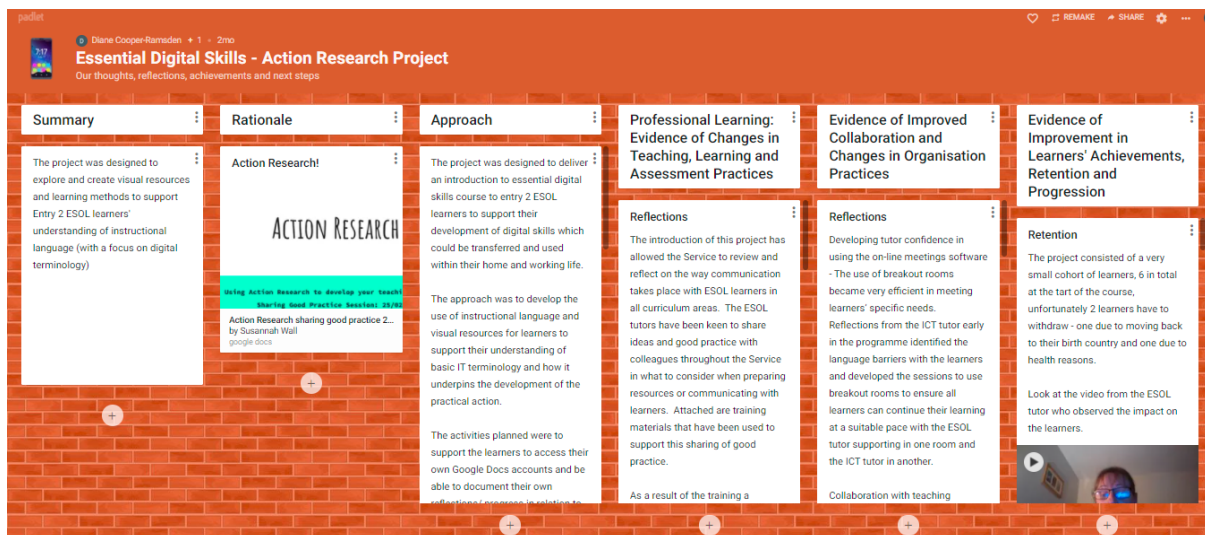


Figure 4: Screenshot of the Good Practice Padlet

## Evidence of improved collaboration and changes in organisational practices

### Use of a Collaborative Padlet

The Padlet became a working document and a community space where the tutors were able to reflect on the sessions, this was further enhanced by Lead Tutors being able to contribute and share their ideas and experiences which were used to develop the course week by week.



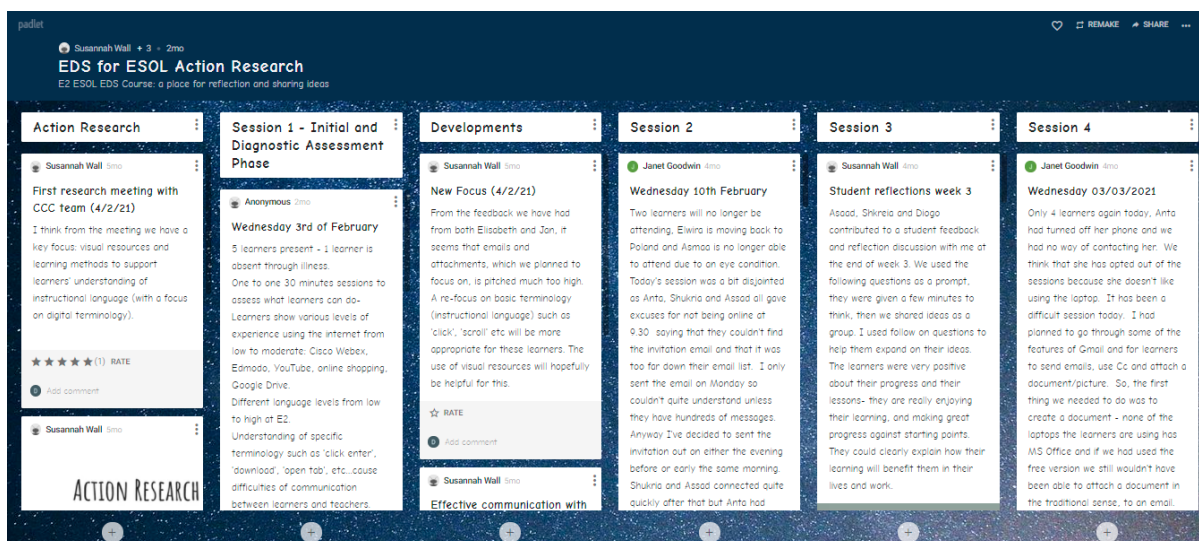


Figure 5: Screenshot of Collaborative Padlet

## Developing tutor confidence in using the online meetings software

The use of breakout rooms became very efficient in meeting learners' specific needs. Reflections from the ICT tutor early in the programme identified the language barriers with the learners and developed the sessions to use breakout rooms to ensure all learners can continue their learning at a suitable pace with the ESOL tutor supporting in one room and the ICT tutor in another.

## Collaboration with teaching colleagues

Teaching using ICT can be stressful for ESOL tutors, but we found having an ICT tutor to support was very useful and the ICT tutor found that having an ESOL tutor present also helped communication. As one tutor stated:

*"I have enjoyed working collaboratively very much ... We agree on lots of good practice, and I've learnt lots about working with ESOL learners. I think my colleague has kept me grounded throughout the course and has supported me when I've struggled with the language barrier".*

## Use of a wider range of digital platforms

The use of the Collaborative Padlet encouraged both tutors to reflect on the sessions and were positive and willing to develop their skills in using this in education. Staff involved in the project showed a positive attitude to using it to share and collaborate on.

## Tutors developing as Reflective Practitioners

The digital action research project created frequent opportunities for the tutors to focus upon aspects of their established teaching strategies, and to collaboratively explore opportunities to develop and try new techniques and resources to improve learner participation both in and between the sessions. Teachers learn from each other and develop strategies and techniques that can be used in their future teaching.

## **Developing a supportive Community of Practice**

Staff development sessions have previously been held in small curriculum teams, but through the project, this has resulted in the sharing of good practice, especially between the ESOL and ICT teams. The tutors have been encouraged to collaborate and share ideas in a relaxed and informal environment. The joint activities have become opened up to enable staff to reflectively evaluate what each team is trialling within their teaching, learning and assessment. This has improved working relationships between tutors from different curriculum areas.

## **Generated practical solutions**

Collaboration between the tutors has helped to identify and find solutions to very practical barriers, such as how to ensure the learners can easily access their online session. Learners were struggling to find the link to the session, therefore as a Service we have decided to set a reminder email to be sent 15 minutes prior to the session, this will ensure the email containing the link is near the top of a learner's inbox and therefore more easily achievable. This is crucial to support a prompt start to the session prior to a learner having confidence in using bookmarks.

## **Evidence of improvement in learners' achievements, retention and progression**

Learners have surpassed expectations and have confidently been able to meet their negotiated targets.

Learners have been exploring and developing the use of their loan laptop devices from the Service. They are becoming less dependent on the use of the mobile phones and developing long lasting understanding of the roles and features of different platforms accessible from their laptops, eg Google search, Google Drive, etc – this is supporting the move to be able to develop their digital skills which they are using in their home-life and preparing them for the world of work. In week 2 the learners had made a language connection with their ESOL class where words such as document, CV and forms were being used. Recognisable language was building learners' confidence.

Three of the learners contributed to a student feedback and reflection discussion at the end of week 3, using the following questions as a prompt:

- What did you find useful?
- What can you do now?
- How will you use this?

Video extracts from the discussion are available on the Good Practice Padlet. The learners were very positive about their progress and their lessons; they are really enjoying their learning and making great progress against starting points. They could clearly explain how their learning will benefit them in their lives and work. The learners identified they were more confident in using their laptop and becoming more and more confident in using Google Drive to sort and work with documents and had an increased confidence to undertake online shopping in a safe and secure way.

The learners also expressed that the digital class had supported them to be able to access their online ESOL courses during lockdown and continue their ESOL learning. One learner commented how he was combining the learning from his ESOL class to his digital class and was both pleased and proud of the progress he had made and was grateful that he had had this opportunity to undertake this digital course.

The tutors commented that the learners are showing good skill development and the positive impact this is having on their confidence. The learners can navigate successfully between Google search, Google images and Google Drive. They can copy and paste images into a new Google Document and add text. They can take screenshots. They have completed extra work away from their formal sessions and have created their own comprehensive glossary for their own use. The learners are able to confidently send e-mails.

The learners have also been successful in attaining the Entry Level 1 Digital Skills for Work qualification accredited by Gateway Qualifications.

### Learning from this project

The course for the action research project had to be delivered fully online due to being in a National Lockdown situation. At the end of the course and upon reflection by the tutors, it was decided moving the course to face to face delivery would support the learners to develop their digital skills in a conducive environment, where the tutor was easily accessible to give the learners the support they need. The learners would be supported to improve their digital skills and prepare them for progression onto an online course. The initial face to face course would help to mitigate learners' anxiety around getting online whilst developing their confidence in using IT equipment.

The skills gained by the ICT Tutor to prepare resources suitable for low level ESOL learners will also be able to be used when preparing and teaching Entry Level 1 and 2 learners to develop their digital skills. The tutor developed her knowledge on the need to grade language and extend the use of visual images to support learning, rather than the resources being too text heavy. The tutor flipped the resource, as can be seen in Figure 3 above, so that the learners were providing the language in a way that supported their own learning.

The tutors worked with learners who had spikey profiles in ESOL and also spikey profiles in digital, but the assumption should never be made that someone who is low level ESOL has low level digital skills, as once the language was no longer a barrier, the learners excelled in their digital skills.

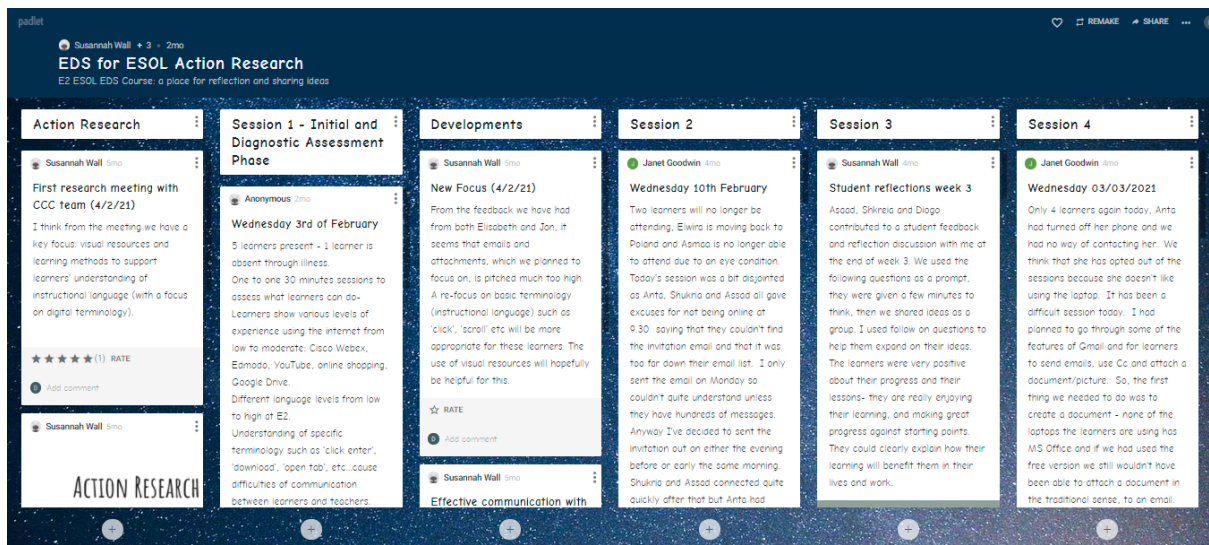
Working collaboratively across specialisms has helped both tutors to develop their teaching practices, when preparing resources and developing digital content for learners. Providing the opportunities for both open and honest discussions between the tutors has been beneficial and resulted in a better learning experience for the learners. The honesty and openness of both tutors supported the success of the collaborative teaching, which was key to its success.

## Appendix 1 – The project team

Project Role	Name	Job Role
Project Lead	Diane Cooper-Ramsden	Skills and Qualifications Manager
Deputy Lead	Susie Wall	Lead Tutor – English and ESOL
Deputy Lead	Lesley Beckwith	Lead Tutor - ICT
Project team	Janet Goodwin	ICT Tutor
	Elisabeth Doyle	ESOL Tutor
Project Mentor	Chloë Hynes (ccConsultancy)	
Research Group Lead	David Prinn (ccConsultancy)	

## Appendix 2 - Tutor Reflections (Padlet)

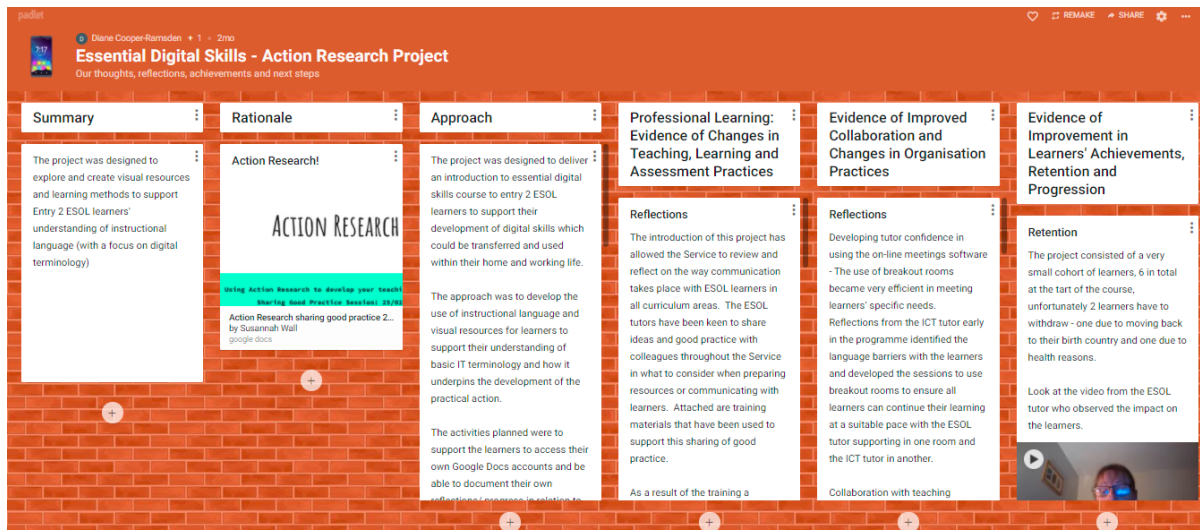
Link to the collaborative community Padlet used throughout the delivery of the course.



Access: [https://padlet.com/c\\_collins2/BarnsleyEDS21](https://padlet.com/c_collins2/BarnsleyEDS21)

nb This is a snapshot taken at the end of the project. The original may or may not still be available here [https://padlet.com/susiew\\_esol/lxi8ph1ikhxb6kh](https://padlet.com/susiew_esol/lxi8ph1ikhxb6kh) and may have been updated since this snapshot was taken.

## Appendix 3 – Multimodal Report (Padlet)



Access: [https://padlet.com/c\\_collins2/BarnsleyEDS21b](https://padlet.com/c_collins2/BarnsleyEDS21b)

nb This is a snapshot taken at the end of the project. The original may or may not still be available here <https://padlet.com/dianecooperramsden/fpv51ks173k6o5xs> and may have been updated since this snapshot was taken.

This Padlet contains:

- videos of the learners highlighting their successes from the course
- training materials and resources that have been used to support this sharing of good practice.



**OUR PARTNERS**



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ccConsultancy, That Reading Thing and Skills Digital are delivering this programme on behalf of the Education and Training Foundation.

**FUNDED BY**



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This programme is funded by the Department for Education.

**THANK YOU**

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