

Engaging With Speakers of Other Languages

The need for public agencies to engage with people in Shetland for whom English is not their first language was recognised. The challenge to initiate this in a way that was appropriate to this small number of people was overcome by approaching the organiser of the 'English as an Additional Language' Classes at Shetland College.

English as an Additional Language Classes

The classes are built around an environment of teaching and learning, including the participants place in society. Therefore the organiser felt it would be entirely appropriate for her to introduce topics for discussion around their experience of public services in Shetland.

The classes are enthusiastic about being asked their opinions and recognise positive outcomes. However, in order to maintain and build up trust between organisations and the class and retain a purpose for everyone involved, the following protocol must be followed.

Protocol

- It must be recognised, at all times that:
- The main purpose of the group is to learn to speak English, with the additional aim of assisting learners to become accustomed to Shetland life. The aims of those who wish to engage are secondary to this.
- The tutors have a close relationship with the groups, built around trust. In order to retain this, and the purpose of the group, they will remain the sole point of contact with the group.
- The group can remain assured that all discussions in the group are confidential, and it will only be general views and opinions that will be passed on to relevant others.

If people wish to seek the views of this group of people they should contact Nancy Heubeck, Adult Learning Manager, on (01595) 743888 or email nancy.heubeck@shetland.gov.uk with a topic they would like to be discussed and a loose set of questions, based on this topic, for which they would like opinions.

English Plus

English Plus was established in 2004 and is held every Thursday afternoon from 2-4pm (with breaks during the school holidays) at the Old Library Centre, Hillhead, Lerwick.

Anyone wishing to consult with this group should contact Nancy Heubeck at Adult Learning on (01595) 743888 or email nancy.heubeck@shetland.gov.uk to arrange to attend a session.

The aims of the drop in are:

- To provide an opportunity for people with English as an Additional Language to talk in English in an informal setting;

- To provide a forum for EAL learners to support each other, to raise issues of common concern, or seek advice and information about living and working in Shetland;
- And to provide an opportunity for agencies to consult informally with people with English as an Additional Language about a range of issues.

It is hoped that future sessions will include regular sessions on, for example, filling out forms, information on services and how to access them, etc. This would provide an opportunity for representatives from services to attend to gain feedback on these services.

Anyone wishing to consult with this group should contact Agnes Tallack, the course organiser, on (01595) 771000 or email agnes.tallack@shetland.uhi.ac.uk to arrange to attend a session.