About English My Way

This summary is part of Tinder Foundation’s full evaluation of Phase 2 of the English My Way programme which ran between April 2015 and March 2016.

Tinder Foundation began delivering the English My Way programme in November 2013, working with BBC Learning English and the British Council. Funded by The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) as part of their English Language competition, the programme - now in its third year - aims to promote community cohesion by supporting people to improve their English language skills through a fresh approach to Pre-entry ESOL, which includes delivery using volunteers as a requirement of the programme.

The English My Way programme combines expert-created online content delivered through the English My Way website, tutor led sessions through the UK online centres network and volunteer-led groups called Learning Circles.

About Tinder Foundation

Tinder Foundation is a national charity that supports digitally and socially excluded people to improve their lives through digital. We bring together thousands of community partners to make up the UK online centres network, reaching deep into disadvantaged communities to help people across the UK gain the support and skills they need to change their lives and overcome social challenges.

Our online learning platforms Learn My Way and English My Way - used in centres throughout the network - help thousands of people each year to gain basic digital skills, English language skills, and to progress to further learning, volunteering and employment.
Reach of English My Way

Since April 2014, English My Way has been delivered in more than 150 UK online centres, across 38 of the 58 areas of highest ESOL need identified by DCLG from 2011 census data as places with the greatest population of non-English speakers.

English My Way reached 9,172 learners over two years, including 880 learners attending community organisations who were not funded to deliver the programme - the English My Way resources were and continue to be available to any organisation wanting to deliver Pre-entry ESOL.

70% of English My Way learners had been in the country for over 2 years at the time they began their learning and 30% had been in the country for over 10 years, showing how successfully English My Way engaged those who had previously slipped through the ESOL net and had been having to cope with life in the UK without English skills.

English My Way managed to engage and support women who had struggled with life in the UK due to lack of English skills, social isolation and cultural barriers such as needing to get approval from family members to undertake learning.¹

The programme reached socially excluded groups who need support most, including jobseekers (37% of all learners) and low-skilled or low-qualified individuals (39% of all learners had no formal education).

¹ In years one and two of the programme, 68% of English My Way learners were female and 32% were male.
Impact of English My Way on learners

As a result of the support they received as part of the English My Way programme, learners from phase 2 have progressed in a variety of different ways.

English My Way has given learners confidence to integrate with their communities. 68% of English My Way learners reported improved confidence in trying to use their English in shops and on public transport, increasing their ability to express themselves effectively in everyday situations and become more independent.

English My Way has empowered learners. 61% of English My Way learners reported improved confidence in trying to use their English with professionals including doctors and teachers, empowering them to achieve better health and learning outcomes for them and their families.

English My Way enables progression and broadens horizons. 70% of English My Way learners have progressed to an Entry Level 1 ESOL course and 72% have gone onto further learning including IT, numeracy and employability skills. After their Pre-entry ESOL learning, 11% of learners went on to volunteer at a UK online centre or other organisation. 22% of learners moved into employment having gained the English skills needed to get a job.

English My Way has given learners confidence to connect with others. 65% of learners reported improved confidence trying to use their English to talk to neighbours and acquaintances, reducing feelings of social isolation and making them feel more connected with others.

"English is very important everywhere, doctors, hospital, bank, nursery talking to teacher. Before coming here, it was very difficult, someone always had to help me but now I can do it on my own. Or I try! It is not perfect. But I try, and the people understand most times."

Yasmin Begum, 30 - English My Way Learner at Goal-Saltley

Impact on volunteers, UK online centres and the wider community

As well as the benefits to learners, centres have benefitted from their involvement in English My Way, and have reported positive impacts on volunteers and their wider community.

Volunteering on English My Way is a gateway to further opportunities. 792 volunteers have formed a key part of the delivery of English My Way, and 85% of them have gone on to further learning at their UK online centre or elsewhere. 67% of English My Way volunteers have gone on to further volunteering roles and 36% have gone on to employment.

English My Way has allowed centres to support ESOL learners better. By taking part in the English My Way programme, 57% of the UK online centres funded in phase 2 of the programme have been able to deliver Pre-entry ESOL for the first time. English My Way has encouraged centres to form new partnerships, forging new links with Children’s Centres and schools, faith venues, other training providers and Jobcentres, with 68% of funded centres reporting that English My Way has helped them develop partnerships for outreach.

English My Way fills the gap for Pre-entry ESOL. All centres reported that English My Way had allowed them to reach out to learners not suited to other forms of ESOL delivery, showing that English My Way is helping to fill the gaps in local ESOL provision left as a result of the reduction in ESOL funding to local colleges.

English My Way allows other local organisations to connect more with those they support. 93% of funded centres reported that English My Way had helped them to support community integration in their area. Organisations like Children’s Centres and schools have previously not been able to properly support people in their communities who lack English skills. By working in partnership with UK online centres delivering English My Way, these support services are now better able to connect and communicate with those members of the community who need English skills and confidence the most.
Effective Engagement and Delivery

The evaluation of the English My Way programme has demonstrated how to effectively engage learners with Pre-entry Level ESOL learning, and how to support them along their journeys.

1. Take learning to the heart of communities
Learners - particularly women - can be constrained to learning at times when their children are at school, and can find it hard to travel to classes or commit to long courses. By delivering in venues like schools, Children's Centres and faith venues like mosques and temples, UK online centres have taken learning into the heart of communities, making it more convenient for learners to attend and encouraging retention.

2. Volunteers bridge the gap
83% of funded centres reported that English My Way helped them recruit more volunteers. Delivering ESOL using volunteers is an innovative way to add capacity to delivery, and by speaking the native languages of learners, understanding cultural sensitivities and sharing similar circumstances, volunteers were able to build trusted relationships and encourage the learners they were supporting to connect with their learning.

3. Be responsive to learners’ circumstances
UK online centres know their communities and are sensitive to learner needs. Many were able to tailor the support they gave English My Way learners including offering free creche facilities, single sex classes, additional health and wellbeing support, as well as working with learners in smaller groups to concentrate on individual challenges.

4. Provide holistic support
Many English My Way learners faced multiple barriers to inclusion and integration, and UK online centres provided additional support with issues like employability, financial capability, health and wellbeing, housing and welfare, functional skills and legal advice. This encouraged engagement and attendance, and improved ESOL learning outcomes.

5. Use blended learning
English My Way has been designed to be interactive and engaging for people learning English for the first time. It comprises videos, worksheets, group and independent online learning resources, brought together in one place, allowing delivery partners to print what they need, assess learners’ English confidence and competence, and manage learners easily using the online Management Information tool.

6. Find creative ways to retain learners
After completing English My Way, 56% of learners wanted to progress onto a formal ESOL course, but there was a lack of available progression routes. This meant centres had to think of creative ways to keep learners engaged such as offering progression to IT courses, other activities like football, creative arts and trips; and creating buddy groups to help ensure that learners did not miss sessions.

“What’s great about English My Way is that it is suitable for those with very low levels of English. It really does start at the very beginning, and helps people build their confidence in practical situations they will come across everyday.”
Bhavna Mithani, Tutor, Cooke E-Learning Foundation

For Further Information
- English My Way Phase 2 Evaluation: Final Evaluation Report
- Community ESOL Handbook - offering practical advice for delivering pre-entry English language in the community.