

Grant Brief

Solihull Informal ESOL Small Grants Programme

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Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council invites applications from organisations to deliver

informal, community-based English language opportunities

for Afghan refugees across the borough.

This programme will fund **small scale, flexible and community-based provision,**

that helps people build confidence using English in everyday situations through **social, practical and engaging activities.**

Grant Overview

- **Total funding available:** £50,000
 - **Maximum grant per organisation:** £5,000
 - **Delivery period:** Up to 12 months
 - The Council may make multiple awards and allocate partial amounts based on the strength of applications and value for money
 - Grants are intended to support **small, community-led initiatives rather than formal ESOL programmes**
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Purpose of the Programme

The programme aims to:

- Support Afghan residents to **build confidence using English in everyday life**
 - Provide **accessible and informal opportunities** to practise speaking and listening
 - Reduce isolation and support **connection to local communities**
 - Encourage progression into employment, education or further learning where appropriate
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Target Cohort

Provision must be aimed at:

- Afghan refugees residing in Solihull
- Individuals with low or no English proficiency
- The programme is open to **participants of all ages**, and proposals are encouraged to take inclusive and flexible approaches. This may include:
 - Adults, children and young people
 - Family-based approaches that support language use within households

- Childcare or creche provision should be included. This is a key enabler of participation, particularly for women, and proposals that remove barriers through childcare support will be strongly encouraged.
 - Mixed-age or community-based groups
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Delivery Principles

All projects must reflect the following principles:

- **Fun and interesting** – activities people are motivated to attend
 - **Useful and purposeful** – enabling participants to build practical skills
 - **Informal and social** – encouraging relaxed participation and interaction
 - **Accessible** – delivered in welcoming, familiar and easy to reach locations
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Service Requirements

Funded organisations will be expected to deliver informal, engaging and community-based opportunities to use and practise English.

Projects should include a mix of:

- Conversational practice, helping participants build confidence speaking and listening
- Practical, real-life English use, linked to everyday situations (e.g. shopping, travel, appointments, school engagement)
- Social or activity-based learning, where English is developed through shared activities (e.g. cooking, crafts, group activities, community events)

Projects are encouraged to:

- Be creative and responsive to the interests and needs of participants
- Create welcoming, informal environments that support confidence building
- Support regular participation rather than one-off sessions
- Incorporate mixed approaches (e.g. conversation + activity + informal learning)

To support accessibility, providers should consider:

- Childcare or creche provision, particularly to enable women's participation
- Use of bilingual staff, volunteers or peer support where helpful
- Flexible delivery formats and locations that are easy to access

Projects may also include:

- Community-based conversation groups, including sessions that are inclusive of younger or school-aged participants
- Family learning approaches that support English language use within the home

- Light-touch support for children or young people where this complements wider community or family-based activities
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Delivery Approach

Projects should:

- Be delivered primarily **face to face within Solihull**
 - Include **group learning and conversational practice**
 - Be accessible and welcoming for newly arrived communities
 - Incorporate **childcare friendly approaches**
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Duration and Reach

- Projects can run for up to 12 months. Applicants may propose shorter delivery periods where appropriate. Delivery may be staggered across the overall programme period, and projects will not necessarily all commence at the same time.
 - Applicants should clearly state their proposed start and end dates and demonstrate how the timing of their project will maximise participation and avoid duplication of provision.
 - Activities should be designed for small group delivery, with typical session sizes of approximately 8 to 12 participants.
 - Applicants should propose realistic participation levels based on the target group they intend to support and the nature of their activity.
 - The overall ESOL Small Grants Programme is expected to benefit approximately 80 Afghan residents across Solihull, comprising 24 adults and 56 young people. Individual projects will contribute towards this overall programme outcome and are not expected to engage all participants.
 - The Council reserves the right to fund projects with different delivery periods and start dates to ensure effective coordination of provision, maximise reach and avoid an oversupply of activities to the same participants at the same time.
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Monitoring and Reporting

Providers will be required to submit:

- Monthly delivery and attendance reports
 - Evidence of learner progress and outcomes
 - Case studies and qualitative feedback
 - End of programme report
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Who Can Apply

Applicants must:

- Be a voluntary, community, faith organisation, registered charity, or constituted community group
 - Demonstrate experience delivering ESOL, community learning or similar provision
 - Have appropriate safeguarding, DBS, equality and data protection arrangements
 - Show capacity to deliver within the agreed timeframe and budget
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Eligible Costs

Funding may be used for:

- Tutors and sessional delivery staff
 - Room hire
 - Learning materials and resources
 - Equipment required for delivery
 - Childcare or creche provision
 - Refreshments
 - Printing and outreach
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Ineligible Costs

Funding cannot be used for:

- Core organisational overheads not directly related to the project
 - Salaries for staff not delivering the project
 - Costs associated with preparing the application
 - Contingency funding or reserves
 - Political or religious activities
 - Activity taking place outside Solihull
 - Recoverable VAT
 - Loans or interest payments
 - Alcohol or illegal substances
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Assessment Criteria

Applications will be assessed on:

- Quality and creativity of the proposed approach, including how activities will engage participants in using and practising English
- Understanding of learner needs and barriers, including how these will be addressed (e.g. childcare, accessibility, confidence)
- Experience skills or community connections that support successful delivery
- Accessibility and inclusivity
- Value for money

Grant Conditions

Successful organisations will be expected to:

- Deliver provision within the agreed 12-month period
- Participate in monitoring and evaluation activity
- Share learning and good practice
- Support community cohesion and integration outcomes

Key Dates

Milestone	Date
Launch of Application Process	Monday 05 October 2026
Meet the funder event at St Barnabo's Church (Over Green Dr, Birmingham B37 6EY)	Wednesday 07 October 2026
Applicant Information Session (Grant Surgery) - Solihull Council House	Tuesday 13 October 2026
Application Deadline (5.00pm)	Monday 26 October (5.00pm)
Assessment Panel	Thursday 29th October 2026
Notification of Award Decisions / Award Letter	Thursday 05 November 2026
Earliest Project Start Date	Tuesday 01 December 2026

The Council reserves the right to amend these dates if required.