

The English UK Member Roadshows

English UK is the largest and longest running English language teaching association.

Dedicated to raising standards in UK ELT since 2004, we pursue excellence in our industry and speak up for UK ELT at home and abroad.

englishuk.com

Rationale and format

The English UK member roadshows 2015 – 2016

The English UK Member Roadshows brought together English UK staff, trustees and members to meet, talk, ask and answer questions in ten different locations and four nations.

The roadshows were the project of our late chief executive, Eddie Byers, who was passionate about meeting members and keen to encourage wider interaction between ELT centres and English UK staff.

Between June 2015 and April 2016, 150 individuals representing just under a third of our membership came together to meet each other and English UK staff, and to discuss our initiatives and your priorities.

An overwhelming majority of attendees told us the roadshows were good, very good or excellent. We believe the roadshows have been a great success and are discussing how we will continue them.

Aims of the roadshows

1. Reach the wider membership
2. Bring colleagues together locally
3. Examine current themes and/or challenges
4. Gain feedback on activities and services
5. Provide an opportunity for members to meet the English UK team

The roadshow programme

Each session included an introduction from the senior management team on member services, from campaigning and public affairs to market information and promotion.

The 2016 roadshows also covered the economic impact report and the English is GREAT campaign, as well as small group sessions on international strategy, marketing promotions, statistics and visas, accreditation and membership segmentation.

The biggest meetings were London and Manchester, and those with the highest proportion of member centres represented were in Cardiff and Belfast.

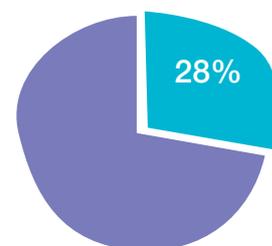
Thank you to our sponsors Cambridge English, and to the English UK members that hosted the events.

“It was marvellous. There was so much energy and so many ideas: I really hope our other members will join us next time.”

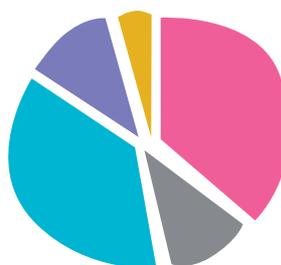
Andrew Fisher, English UK Enterprises Board



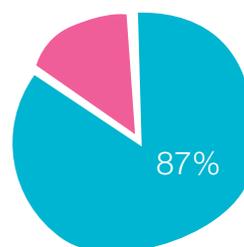
150 members from 130 institutions



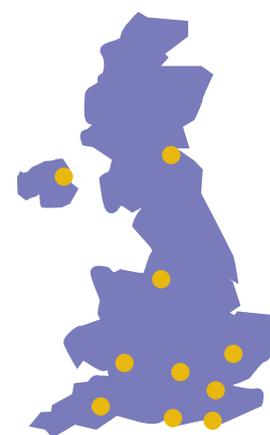
Almost one third of member centres attended a roadshow



Managing Directors	37%
Principals	36%
Marketing	12%
Directors of Studies	11%
Administration	4%



Private centres made up the majority of attendees



10 roadshows from June 2015 - April 2016

What issues are most important to you?

The English UK member roadshows 2015 – 2016

During the ten months it took to complete our first round of roadshows, certain issues were constants. Tier 4 and ISI accreditation were the biggest issues, with lobbying, marketing, Accreditation UK and English UK itself frequently raised and debated too.

SELT testing was a hot topic in the first two roadshows only, whilst the EU referendum was an issue from February onwards, with several questions about the English UK position on a possible Brexit and how any effects on ELT could be managed.

Tier 4 and ISI inspections

This was the most frequently raised topic, accounting for around a sixth of all questions members asked.

Concerns centred on whether to remain in Tier 4 as they came up for a full re-inspection; the risks of abandoning Tier 4 status; and the advantages and disadvantages of ISI. Many members feared that the government would “move the goalposts” and restrict the availability of student visitor visas to sponsors.

Answering a question on this in Brighton, Eddie said: “Students are included in the net migration figures if they are here more than 12 months. Does the government want net migration to go up? I don’t think so. They want Tier 4 to reduce and that alone tells me you’re likely to be safe with the short term student visas. It’s also durable now that it’s written into the visa rules.”

The difficulties for students opening bank accounts – or receiving discounted travel in London – if their centres were not sponsors, were also raised.

Huan Japes, deputy chief executive for professional services, told the London roadshow that English UK had twice met the British Banking Association and is now investigating other options for student bank accounts, such as StudyPay.

“It was very insightful. I think it’s important that we band together as an industry to work on the very good reputation we have.”

Jill Stewart, EF International Language School Cambridge



Lobbying and campaigning

Members were keen to know what English UK was doing on their behalf, about the recent economic impact report, and to talk about their lobbying efforts with constituency MPs and Assembly members.

“Everybody can do it. You have to badger a bit; invent something that needs opening,” Nigel Paramor of English in Chester, who is on English UK’s Public Affairs Advisory Group, suggested in Manchester.

Most events reported positive contacts with up to four local MPs, while those in Edinburgh, Northern Ireland and Wales also mentioned useful interactions with Assembly members.

Asked in Manchester how English UK lobbying had made a difference, Huan mentioned proposed visa changes that did not go ahead in November 2015: a rise in the language level to IELTS 5.5 and a halving of the permitted refusal rate.

Other developments discussed were a joint campaigning group, with other leading organisations, such as the Association of Colleges, Universities UK, UKCISA and Exporting Education UK, and the possibility of becoming involved in a wider All Party Parliamentary Group on international education.

“The revenue from our sector is £1.2bn, for universities it’s £11bn – we need to connect, raise our profile and push out a common message,” Huan said in Bournemouth.

Specific campaigning issues

Three campaigning subjects were specifically discussed at several events:

- 1 Widening the scope of the 11-month student visa to pathway and FE courses
- 2 Campaigning for all ELT centres to be accredited, whether or not they take visa students
- 3 Removing students from net migration targets.

While there was agreement on the third issue, there was debate around the first two.

Some members expressed reservations that a wider 11-month visa might come under more scrutiny, whereas others, like Shaf Hussain of Central College Nottingham, felt: “The 11-month visa would make it easier for FE. Successful colleges lose everything if they go to Ofsted grade 3.”

The idea of all ELT centres being accredited also divided opinion. In Edinburgh, Greg Burrell of Fettes Centre for Language & Culture said a lot of people didn’t know whether or not a school was accredited “but there does need to be some minimum requirements.”

Malcolm Davidson of International House feared this might penalise some groups, such as a charity teaching Polish nationals he knew of in Aberdeen.

“We want to be the leading voice of our industry. We want to empower you as members, developing your voice locally and through our work with the Home Office, BIS, all-party groups and industry groups.”

Huan Japes, English UK

English UK and our initiatives: what you wanted to talk about

The English UK member roadshows 2015 – 2016

English UK membership

Ideas for the development of the membership package drew a warm response at the roadshows.

“We’re working to find out what interests different types of members to create membership packages, with services, benefits and costs suited to member needs” Alice Marcolin, English UK’s membership manager, explained in Manchester.

Ideas for the future included automatic subscription to relevant regional and specialist groups, and offering training sessions or conference attendance as an optional part of the subscription package.

Regional groups and training

Many members liked the regional nature of the roadshows and asked for more training sessions and other events to be held outside London.

Huan explained that more regional training events had been planned, but did not have enough bookings to go ahead. The use of webinars and working with regional groups to gauge interest and priorities were therefore being investigated.

Regional groups were the subject for discussion in Brighton, Oxford and Bournemouth: the three remaining ELT hotspots not currently in a group. Members broadly welcomed plans for a regional group, but there was a lot of discussion about the details.

Plans to create a focus group for FE members and to provide training aimed at FE and pathway providers were also raised.

ISI/Accreditation UK

There were several questions about whether ISI could be valid for English UK membership, and of the value of the scheme.

“This is something that is on our radar and the Board is considering a number of options,” Huan said, explaining that the Accreditation UK partnership with the British Council ends in 2017, and that the executive would like regular meetings with colleagues at ISI.

International strategy

English UK’s new international strategy, its system of prioritising markets and plans to increase direct marketing, was discussed at every roadshow from September 2015.

On the move to more direct channel resources, Annie Wright, deputy chief executive for business services, told the London group: “It doesn’t mean we’re taking away from B2B, but we’ve upped what we’re putting into direct channels and contracts.”

Annie also emphasised that putting markets into four priority tiers “is a flexible framework. We’re not going to feel restricted – but it helps focus team resources. Even when something is offered to us and seems to be free, it isn’t free in terms of team members’ time.”

Janet Galbraith, from the Centre of English Studies in Edinburgh, welcomed the new focus on the broader market and digital strategies. “We’re constantly saying come but part of me thinks: what do you want? Do you need to come to UK, can we do that online? English UK can help us understand the product.”

“We need to work together. We need to go through the issues the industry faces, see what you want, see what works and synthesise plans for the future... And if you think something is important, tell us.”

Eddie Byers, late chief executive of English UK

Student statistics

The development of a new approach to student statistics that will better enable members plan ahead, was widely welcomed.

“Markets are tighter, competitors stronger – you have to be savvy and have good data,” Jodie Gray, head of market development, said. “We want to look at how to produce more effective data for everyone to make better decisions.”

The developing market has also led English UK to try an alternative to the overseas fairs, as Annie announced in answer to a question in Manchester.

Next year there will be half the usual four English UK fairs. Instead we will run two roadshows, based on the format already used in China with agent workshops in several cities. “We’re asking whether the model fits the market and think in Western Europe a roadshow will be better and more cost-effective,” she said.

English is GREAT: speak to the world

Impressed by the scope and reach of the English is GREAT campaign to promote UK ELT in Brazil, members were curious what the benefits of such a large campaign will be.

The legacy of the English is GREAT campaign in Brazil will include helping the UK to compete against other “huge ELT nations” in future, as a basis for bidding for further UK Government-funded campaigns, and also as a template for running our own similar campaigns in other markets.

“I like this new approach
– it’s like a door opening.”

Susan Brearey, Suzanne Sparrow
Language School, Plymouth



