# Kent council considers scrapping English classes for migrants amid Reform UK cost-cutting drive



A recent proposal by a council led by Reform UK has sparked significant debate, suggesting the potential scrapping of English lessons for migrants in an effort to eliminate what they perceive as wasteful government spending. Linden Kemkaran, the leader of Kent County Council, stated that her administration would investigate the costs associated with council-funded English classes, indicating that if deemed not value for money, these programs could be cut. Notably, Kemkaran proposed apps like Duolingo as alternatives, suggesting that the onus of learning English should rest on the individual.

The backdrop of this proposal aligns with the Reform UK party's broader campaign, dubbed the ‘DOGE’ initiative, aimed at scrutinising local government contracts to ensure taxpayers receive better value. The party, founded by Nigel Farage, claims a long-standing issue of mismanagement within local councils has resulted in excessive expenditure. The recent departure of Zia Yusuf, the party's chairman who was key in launching the DOGE campaign, adds an element of turmoil to their initiatives, emphasising the urgency within the Reform UK agenda.

Critics of potential cuts to English classes warn of the implications such decisions could have on social cohesion and the integration of migrants. Currently, local councils across the UK allocate approximately £1.1 million in public funds for English language classes, which serve practical purposes, covering essential topics like shopping and job applications. The effectiveness of these programmes, however, remains contentious; reports show daunting completion rates and ongoing discussions about the appropriate use of taxpayer money.

Moreover, the backdrop of this policy discussion is taken further by recent proposals for stringent immigration reforms, which include raising English language requirements for work visa applicants to an A-Level standard. While the government aims to bolster the economic integration of migrants, the increase in standards raises questions about accessibility and the socio-economic factors influencing language acquisition.

Additional voices within Reform UK stress the importance of English proficiency for economic participation. Rupert Lowe, a party MP, vehemently criticises the nation’s multicultural approach, asserting that a solid command of English is foundational for any migrant seeking to contribute to the UK economy. This perspective resonates with recent census data revealing that a significant number of migrants in the UK struggle with English.

One notable challenge that remains in the ongoing debate is the availability of government-funded English classes. In some regions, migrants face waiting times of up to three years to access these resources, exacerbated by budget cuts and increasing demand. Although government spending on English provision has been reported at £20 million in response to advocacy for facilitating language acquisition, these classes are in high demand, indicating a potential mismatch between resources and needs.

As discussions continue, the implications of cutting English classes for migrants could have far-reaching consequences for integration efforts in the UK. While the need for fiscal responsibility is an undeniable aspect of governance, balancing this with the necessity of fostering a cohesive society becomes increasingly complex as the UK navigates its approach to immigration and education.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2065374/reform-council-english-lessons), [[4]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/migrants-visa-learn-english-governement-new-immigration-reforms-b1226528.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2065374/reform-council-english-lessons), [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/may/02/reform-uk-nigel-farage-english-local-elections), [[5]](https://www.gbnews.com/politics/reform-uk-rupert-lowe-multiculturalism-failed-language)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.visaverge.com/ukimmigration/uk-councils-use-1-1m-public-funds-to-provide-refugees-with-english-classes/), [[6]](https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/home-news/migrants-wait-years-english-classes-government-lessons-esol-a7517221.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/migrants-visa-learn-english-governement-new-immigration-reforms-b1226528.html), [[7]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-38510628)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2065374/reform-council-english-lessons> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.visaverge.com/ukimmigration/uk-councils-use-1-1m-public-funds-to-provide-refugees-with-english-classes/> - This article discusses how UK councils are allocating £1.1 million of public funds to provide English language classes for refugees. It details the various methods of delivery, including community centre lessons, online courses, and individual tutoring. The classes cover practical themes like shopping, commuting, and job applications, with courses categorized into beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels. The article also highlights challenges such as low completion rates and public debates over the allocation of taxpayer funds for these programs.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/may/02/reform-uk-nigel-farage-english-local-elections> - This article reports on Reform UK's significant gains in the 2025 English local elections, challenging the traditional dominance of Labour and the Conservatives. Led by Nigel Farage, the party gained control of at least six county councils and one mayoralty. The article notes that Reform UK campaigned primarily on anti-immigrant sentiment, with Farage claiming the vote marked the end of two-party politics in the UK.
4. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/migrants-visa-learn-english-governement-new-immigration-reforms-b1226528.html> - This article discusses proposed UK immigration reforms requiring migrants to achieve an A-Level standard of English to obtain a work visa. The reforms aim to raise the English language standards for work visa applicants and extend the waiting period for indefinite leave to remain to up to ten years. The article also mentions that visa applications from countries with high asylum claim rates may be restricted under the new government plans.
5. <https://www.gbnews.com/politics/reform-uk-rupert-lowe-multiculturalism-failed-language> - This article features Reform UK MP Rupert Lowe's criticism of the UK's integration policies, stating that multiculturalism has failed. He questions how migrants can benefit the economy without speaking English and emphasizes that the first condition for coming to the UK should be the ability to speak English. The article follows new census data revealing that nearly one million migrants in the UK struggle with English.
6. <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/home-news/migrants-wait-years-english-classes-government-lessons-esol-a7517221.html> - This article highlights the long waiting times for government-funded English classes for migrants in parts of the UK, with some areas reporting waits of up to three years. Despite recommendations for compulsory English classes upon arrival, staff at centres in high migrant population areas report waiting lists of two to three years. The article also discusses the impact of government cuts on the availability of these classes.
7. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-38510628> - This article reports on a cross-party group of MPs and peers advocating for migrants to learn English before coming to the UK or to attend language classes upon arrival. The group emphasizes that speaking English is key to full participation in UK society and the economy. The government is reported to be spending £20 million on English language provision in response to these recommendations.