

News Release
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New initiatives affecting all English UK members announced at Annual Conference

A new membership model tailored more to the needs of different centres, and a series of free roadshow events visiting every region are among the first initiatives to come from our first-ever survey of members.

Chief Executive Eddie Byers told around 120 members at the Annual Conference in Manchester that while the survey had shown a very positive approval score, he wanted to do better year on year.

“We’re reviewing our membership model and seeing the potential for some segmentation: different members are looking for slightly different things. We’re looking at the model we’ve got, and how to make it really relevant to each different type of member in different ways to now. That’s what we will do. We’ll also be looking at some simplification.”

He also promised to improve communications between member centres and staff with a series of roadshow events around the UK, free of charge, to enable broader discussion of issues facing the industry.

Outlining English UK’s new five-point strategy, created after consultations including visits to around a hundred member centres, Mr Byers said: “Our vision is that we want English UK to be the best trade association for ELT in the world: I say we are great in lots of ways but there are things we can do so much better and that’s why I’m here and what I want to make happen. Our mission is to help you succeed.” The strategy covers satisfying the needs of members, quality assurance, the business environment, promoting the UK as the world’s premier ELT study destination, and effective management of resources.

The one and a half-day conference was held in Manchester with a dual focus on members’ business needs and English UK plans for the future.

Business-focused sessions included immigration lawyer Nichola Carter’s advice on avoiding visa problems. Good news, she said, was that Short Term Study Visas were now in the Immigration Rules but it was important to note the differences between these and the former Student Visitor Visas. She also warned Tier 4 centres approaching 10 per cent refusals to take swift action, and suggested that asking UKVI for clarification on visa issues was something to be done with great caution. There were also very practical sessions on the new distance selling regulations and data protection.

Jacqueline Kassteen of ICEF Monitor gave another very popular session with insights into how to attract students from South Korea, China and Japan despite demographic changes in their markets, including personalised learning and virtual reality.

Members liked the new format. Dawn Abbott of Into Manchester said it felt “absolutely fantastic” that so many people had travelled to the city, and that there was a focus outside London. First-timer Adam Smith, of the Winchester School of English, said: “In these uncertain times it’s good to come together with people in the same position and get a sense of what’s going on and also a good chance to network. There’s been some really relevant sessions, and ideas like the Roadshow are brilliant. It’s nice to see an interest in what members say, and getting schools in an area together.”

Leon Zhang of KKCL in Harrow, another first-timer, said English UK had been moving in the right direction with its member survey and other recent initiatives, and liked the idea of regional meetings so that schools could get together and come up with new ideas, and share knowledge and information. For Jan Fossgard, of the Purley Language College, it was an informative event and “reassuring” to hear Eddie Byers’ plans for the future direction of the association.

Sarah Cooper, Chair of English UK, said the conference had combined a practical business focus with a clear vision and a revitalised strategy, reflecting the findings of the membership survey.

“A new energy has been created, despite the continued threat of the key headaches [thank you Nichola Carter], and we need to let that now gather momentum as we continue the conversation through the series of roadshows we are about to launch. We will be coming round the country to meet with regional and special interest groups, to hear your views as well as to include and actively engage you in our efforts.”

Notes to Editors

1. English UK is the world's leading language teaching association, with almost 480 accredited centres in membership. It covers university and further education college language departments, international study centres in independent schools, educational trusts and charities, and private sector colleges. English UK is a UK registered charity (www.englishuk.com).
2. For more information, please contact Alice Marcolin (English UK Membership Manager and conference organiser) at alice@englishuk.com