Adult Learners’ Week
2014 Evaluation
OBJECTIVES FOR 2014

Promotion
• To create year-round activity to extend the impact of Adult Learners’ Week. This will include policy seminars, attendance at the Skills Show in November, and the Party Conferences in the autumn.
• The Festival of Learning - from May and culminating in Adult Learners’ Week celebrations in the third week of June – to incorporate activity from a range of partners such as VQ Day, Learning at Work Week, and Museums at Night.
• To develop three new partnerships with organisations that can help promote adult learning.
• Implementation of a public affairs strategy to raise awareness of the benefits of adult learning with national and local politicians.
• All of these elements are underpinned by publicising ESF’s support for Adult Learners’ Week.

Policy
• To engage and secure enhanced support from at least two additional government departments such as DWP and Department of Health.
• To engage with three national employers in order to increase the reach and status of Adult Learners’ Week.

Practice
• Engage with, and increase the number of learning providers who will hold a Festival of Learning to support Adult Learners’ Week across the year.
ACTIVITY REVIEW

- Overview
- Funders, partners and supporters
- Political support
- National events
- Local events
- Digital engagement
- Media relations
- Summary
- What’s next?
2014 CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

• **1,523** nominations received for the Adult Learners’ Week, and Transforming Lives Awards.

• Over **100** national, regional and local award winners across the country.

• Two-month long Festival of Learning in partnership with Inspired by, Museums at Night, The Skills Show, Learning at Work Week, VQ Day, the National Portrait Gallery, Universities Week, BCS and CIPR.

• Over **3,212** grass roots ‘Have a Go’ events held.

• **40** MPs and Peers engaged in constituency level activity, national and local events.

• **295,881** page views of the Adult Learners’ Week website.

• **#ALW14** reached over 105,000 twitter accounts.
FUNDERS, PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS - ENGLAND
As part of the revised strategy for Adult Learners’ Week 2014, there was a significant focus on public affairs, with engagement of politicians across parties as a key objective. 40 MPs and Peers were engaged in constituency level activity, national and local events across England. This included a pass it on skills challenge for MPs who attended local ALW events.

**MPs and Peers that attended national and local events in England included:**
- Matthew Hancock MP, Minister of State for Skills and Enterprise
- Caroline Dinenage MP, Member of the Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) Select Committee
- Steve Webb MP, Minister of State for Pensions
- Liam Byrne MP, Shadow Minister for Universities, Science and Skills.
- Baroness Sal Brinton, Member of the Liberal Democrat Manifesto Working Group
- Stephen Timms MP, Shadow Minister for Employment
- Sharon Hodgson MP, Shadow Minister for Equalities
- Catherine McKinnell, Shadow Minister for the Treasury
- Baroness Sharp of Guildford
- Baroness Eaton
- Stephen Lloyd MP
- Kelvin Hopkins MP
- Tessa Munt MP
- Sir Bob Russell MP
- Grahame Morris MP
13 June – PR launch of NIACE’s General Election Manifesto – Skills for Prosperity
17 June – Parliamentary Reception – England
19 June – Skills for Prosperity Conference (supported by NOCN) – England

Speakers included:
- Matthew Hancock MP, Minister for Skills and Enterprise
- Rt. Hon. Liam Byrne MP, Shadow Minister for Universities and Skills
- Baroness Brinton, Member of the Liberal Democrat Manifesto Working Group
- Alex Pratt OBE, Chair of the National LEP Network
- Cathy Walsh OBE, Principal & Chief Executive, Barking and Dagenham College
- Rajay Naik, Director of Government & External Affairs, The Open University
- Simon Harper, Training & Development Manager, Port of Tilbury
‘PASS IT ON’ ACTIVITY

40 MPs across the country took part in skills challenges with their constituents.
Nominations for the Adult Learners’ Week Awards opened in October 2013 and closed in January 2014.

1,523 nominations were received for individuals, projects, apprentices, employers and tutors across the country.

The National Awards Ceremony was held on Monday 16th June at 8 Northumberland Avenue, London. The event celebrated the achievements of 16 national award winners.

Nine local awards ceremonies were held across the country from 29 May to 13 June.
In order to engage more employers in the campaign, NIACE introduced an Employer Award Category.

71 nominations were submitted, as well as 219 Apprentice nominations.

Employers included:
• Babcock international group
• British Army (National Award Winner)
• BAE Systems PLC
• Jaguar Land Rover
• McDonald's Restaurants Ltd (National Award Winner)
• Topps Tiles PLC (National)
• Quest PR
• MGB Engineering
• JN Bentley Ltd
• Harrison Catering Service Ltd
• Marriott International
• Warburtons (Nominated a Regional Young Adult Learner Award Winner)
• DSG Donnington
• Nestle Purina
• Jamie Oliver’s Fifteen (Nominated a National ESF Young Adult Learner Award Winner)
• Doubletree Hilton (Nominated a National Young Adult Learner Finalist)
• Volkswagen (Nominated a Regional Apprentice Award Winner)
• Dunelm
• NHS
• NHS Wales
• Welsh Water
• DVLA

For the first time, NIACE has also developed partnerships with professional membership bodies including:
• CIPR
• CMI
• BCS
• ACCA
There were 37 nominations for the ESF Adult Learners’ Week Awards for young adults, individuals and projects. Nominations were made by the following organisations:

- Cornwall Food Foundation
- Truro and Penwith College
- Acorn Training
- Kennedy Scott Training and Development Ltd
- The K9 Project
- Working Links
- Hartlepool Borough Council
- Mercer House 1842
- Carlisle College
- unionlearn (TUC)
- Cornwall Neighbourhoods for Change
- Truro and Penwith College Truro and Penwith College
- Richard Huish College
- Avon & Somerset Probation Trust Avon & Somerset Probation Trust
- Sandy Helping Hands Counselling and Guidance Centre
- Unlocking Potential
- Cornwall College Group
- Unison
- Tribal Group
ESF AWARD WINNERS - NATIONAL

Jordan George
ESF National Young Adult Learner Award

“I’ve always been interested in food and wanted to turn my life around – the Fifteen Cornwall Apprenticeship seemed perfect.”

Jordan was unemployed, getting into trouble and had no focus. But following an Apprenticeship with the Fifteen restaurant in Cornwall he is on his way to becoming a professional chef.

Melanie Tomkinson
ESF Individual Award

“My confidence is growing every day”

Melanie was struggling with a life of crime, addiction and homelessness. However, engaging in education and training during her two year prison sentence has enabled her to stay clean and even secure a part-time job.

Bad Boys Bakery
National Project Award

“The Bakery has led me to a better position in life and I can now support my family.”

Bad Boys’ Bakery is a social enterprise that gives serving offenders support, skills and qualifications and most importantly helps to find them relevant employment on release, cutting reoffending rates.
ESF AWARD WINNERS – LOCAL

Chris McKay  Steven Leeming  Paul Whitlock  Beverley McDonald

Andy Robinson  Phil McCormick  Kerry Glenn

K9 Project  New Futures
The Festival of Learning provided an opportunity to bring together partners across the sector to offer more opportunities for adults to learn throughout May and June, culminating in Adult Learners’ Week. New partners included the National Portrait Gallery, CIPR as well as the British Computing Society.

Festival of Learning National Events:

- Skills Show Experience – throughout May and June
- Museums at Night - 15 -17 May
- Inspired by... – 19 May – 20 June
- Learning at Work Week - 19 – 25 May
- Volunteers Week - 1– 7 June
- VQ Day - 4 June
- Universities Week – 9 - 15 June
- Carers Week - 10 -16 June
- Free CIPR Webinars – 14 - 20 June
- Adult Learners’ Week 14 – 20 June

Alongside national events, over 3,212 local ‘have a go’ activities took place across England.
A VARIETY OF ORGANISATIONS ENGAGED AT A LOCAL LEVEL

6 Book Challenge
Adviser Plus
Age UK
Aintree Hospital
Anglia Ruskin University
AoC groups
Army Education Centre, Woolwich
Baa Ram Ewe
Barnsley and District U3A
Berenblut IT Training & Consultancy
Beverley & District U3A
Bishop Grossteste University, Lincoln
Blackburn College
Bridlington U3A
Burngreave Food Bank
Business Insider
Buxton & Leek college
Camberley U3A
Cambridge GET Group
Care Training EM
Champion for Learning/ Learning at Work Week
CHAMPS Public Health Network
Cheshire Language Academy
City College Peterborough
CMFT
Community Learning Leadership Hub
Co-op
Co-op Community Foundation
Craven U3A
Creating Space For You
Creative Catalyst Network
Creative Wellbeing
CVS groups
Dementia Action Alliance/ Alzheimer’s Society
Dementia Network Cumbria
Derby Adult Learning Service
Derbyshire College
East Bristol Advice Centre
East Midlands Ambulance Service
ETHOS Project (Surrey)
Exemplas Ltd Quest4Training (Herts)
Fir Vale Food Bank
Firth Park Food Bank
Four Seasons Shopping centre, Mansfield
Garden Museum
Gateway Qualifications
Gleadless Valley Food Bank
GMLPN (GM Colleagues ESF network)
Grace Food Bank
Grimsby and Cleethorpes U3A
Grosvenor Centre, Northants
Guide Dogs
Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
Haxby & Wigginton U3A
Health Education Yorkshire and the Humber
HEART Partnership
HENW
Hive
HMP Elmley (Manchester College education team)
A VARIETY OF ORGANISATIONS ENGAGED AT A LOCAL LEVEL

Hornsea & District U3A
Huddersfield New College
IF Partnership
Ilkley & District U3A
JCP
John Lewis
Jubilee Food Bank
Kaplan Adult Learning
KGV Southport
Kingston University
Kirklees Council – Library HQ
Kissing it Better
Languages 2000
LASALS
LASS
Learning Advocates
Learning at Work Week
Leeds Community Learning Trust
Leeds U3A
Leicester City Library Service
Leicester College
Leicester University
Lincolnshire CC
Liverpool ALS
Liverpool and Sefton Chamber/ Liverpool City Region Employment and Skills Board, GM Chamber and GMLPN, East Lancs Chamber and Lancashire WBL Exec Forum
Liverpool City Council
London Museums Group
London Workbased Learning Alliance
Luton Borough Council
LVSC Steve Kerr re nominations
MAES Mencap
Matthew Benson-Smith
Mears LGA NW Housing Network Group
Medex Group Ltd (workplace training)
Morley Gallery
Mount Tabor Food Bank
MSH Partnership
Museum of Oxford and Town Hall
Museums at Night
Museums Network
National Museum Liverpool
Natural Voice Network
NOMs North West
Norfolk Museum Service
North Herts College
Nottingham Women’s centre
NW Ambulance Service
Offending Learning Services
Older Adults Day Care Cumbria
PATH Yorkshire
Pay & Employment Rights Service (Yorkshire)
POA LEARNING
Portsmouth Museums
Prisoners Education Trust
Quick Reads
RAF Cosford
Realise Futures
ReNew Cleaning
Richmond U3A
Rosebery Housing Association
Royal Naval College Greenwich
S6 Food Bank
Salvation Army
Salvation Army Sheffield
SAS Daniels
Scarborough U3A
Seevic College
Settle District U3A
Shared Harmonies CIC
Skills Academy North West
Skills for Care
A VARIETY OF ORGANISATIONS ENGAGED AT A LOCAL LEVEL

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<td>WEA</td>
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<td>African Community School</td>
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<td>West Kent Extra Housing Association March</td>
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<td>West Suffolk College (WSC)</td>
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<td>Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust</td>
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<td>Westway Development Trust</td>
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<td>Workplace Learning</td>
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LOCAL EVENTS

Birkbeck University

Hackney Learning Trust

Morley College Inspired By awards

10 Interns with Learning Disabilities who completed the ‘Supported Internship’ at Trafford Hospital.

Adult Community Service Awards in the South East
LOCAL EVENTS

Adult Learner’s Week at Leicestershire Libraries

Learning day at RAF Cosford

Keith Vaz MP with EM regional ALW winner Taj Sahota

Westminster Kingsway College, held their own awards ceremony

Craft courses at Learn Devon
LOCAL EVENTS

David Hughes meeting with NW MEP Julie Ward

Port of Tilbury Employees at East of England Ceremony

Shared Harmonies Community Choir at the Y&H Local Awards Ceremony

East of England – Local Awards Ceremony

Yorkshire and the Humber Regional Awards Ceremony
Celebrating Achievement in Adult Learners' Week

Submitted by dlynch on Tue, 24/06/2014 - 5:22pm

The WEA North West Region held its Adult Learner's Week celebrations on Friday 20th June at the Foresight Centre in Liverpool. The event was attended by a variety of statutory, voluntary and private sector representatives with the Shadow Minister for Public Health, Luciana Berger presenting the awards. Two WEA students Diane Unsworth and Denise Watson received certificates of achievement and the NHS Health Education North West Award was presented to John Gallery from the Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospitals Trust (RLBUHT), who received the First Step into Employment Award.

(Photograph above: WEA Regional Director Greg Coyne, WEA student Denise Watson and recipient of NIACE Cert of Achievement, WEA tutor Maria Tavares and Shadow Health Minister Luciana Berger MP)

The event also acknowledged the end of the WEA’s Liverpool Dementia Project which was developed with £5000 of funding from Merseytravel. The project delivered a range of outputs such as a city wide consultation on dementia, 18 memory cafes and awareness training delivered to frontline travel transport and customer service staff. Parts of this work were delivered in partnership with the RLBUHT.

The event also celebrated the strong partnership work between the RLBUHT and the WEA and recognised the contribution of Shaun Lever, Lead Dementia Practitioner who was presented with a WEA Award for Outstanding Contribution to Dementia Awareness. Our major partner in the project, Merseytravel were presented with the WEA North West Region’s first ever Health and Wellbeing Award in recognition of their support for the Dementia Project.

A copy of the Dementia Project Report can be downloaded here.
DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT – ADULT LEARNERS’ WEEK WEBSITE

www.alw.org.uk

- **295,881** page views
- **68,272** unique users
- **Over 12,000** visits made from mobile devices
- **88.68%** of users referred from Twitter and Facebook
TWITTER IMPACT - #ALW14 PEAKED ON MONDAY 16 JUNE
A selection of tweets from politicians, journalists, partners, learners & other stakeholders
A selection of tweets from politicians, journalists, partners, learners & other stakeholders
NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL PRESS & MEDIA

- Daily Telegraph
- The Sun
- Daily Mail
- Daily Mirror
- FE Week
- TES
- MJ
- FE News
- Training Journal
- Choice Magazine
- Bon Marche
- World News
- BBC Radio Three Counties
- BBC Nottingham
- BBC Hereford & Worcester
- BBC Radio Wiltshire
- Lincolnshire FM
- BBC Radio Wales
- Nottingham Post
- Gloucestershire Echo
- Sheffield News
- Sheffield Telegraph
- East End Life
- Bristol Post
- Bexley Times
- Shields Gazette
- Wisbech Standard
- Ipswich Star
- Yorkshire Post
- Grimsby Telegraph
- Lancashire Telegraph
- Kent online
- Kent Messenger
- East London Advertiser
- This is local London
- Hereford Times
- Hackney Gazette
- Telegraph and Argus
- West Briton
- Hucknall Today
- Mansfield Chad
- This is West Country
- Slough Express
ADULT LEARNERS’ WEEK 2014 – WINNERS’ STORIES

How Rob retired — and then learned new skills

EDUCATION & COURSES

AFTER retiring aged 69 from his insurance brokerage business, Robert Nott found a new lease of life through learning.

He embarked on various language courses, with much of his time taken up as voluntary chairman of the Beckley Venture Capital Company, which has set up 17 businesses.

Mr Nott, now aged 79, from Hythe, Kent, later became a full-time student at Canterbury Christchurch University, obtaining an MSc in business administration.

He continued to further his education with diploma courses in psychology in the workplace, emotional psychology, advanced psychology and counselling.

With this added knowledge, he worked as a volunteer for a charity that helps the mentally fragile find employment.

He obtained a diploma in TESOL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) to assist his voluntary work and recently completed a course on acupuncture.

Mr Nott said: “None of the knowledge acquired has been wasted because barely a day passes by when my help is not requested.”

His success story is being highlighted as part of Adult Learners’ Week, which is run by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE). This is designed to celebrate the "transformational power of lifelong learning.”

Nicole Cook, 22, from Canterbury, has been awarded a Young Adult Learner Award for the South-East.

She was the first apprentice in Canterbury College’s IT team and is now employed by the college and on her way to achieving a level three apprenticeship. “I really enjoyed the combination of working with experienced colleagues and my peers, she says.”

“Hope to continue to progress up the IT career ladder, pushing aside barriers facing women in this field.”

Meanwhile, NIACE has published a new manifesto, calling for an independent review of long-term skills needs and funding levels.

David Hughes, chief executive of NIACE, said: “The country faces huge challenges that require a skills-led recovery, but the system is not designed to face those challenges.”

“There will be 11.6 million job vacancies over the next decade, but only seven million young people entering the labour market. Skilled adults have to fill that gap. Longer working lives are a reality we have to tackle.”

FOR details, see: www.niace.org.uk

SRARH HARRIS

Thirst for knowledge: Robert Nott

Adult learner Harry Poole win national awards

13 June 2014 Last updated at 13:32 BST

Adult learners across Wales have been celebrated for their hard work and commitment to education, at a national award ceremony in Llandudno.

A total of 14 winners were praised for their passion and willingness to learn a new trade, often in the face of difficult circumstances.
Skills education ‘vital’ for people of all ages

As part of adult learners’ week, David Hughes argues that learning should be a lifelong process, continuing even when we leave the education system.

By David Hughes
9.3 AM BST 18 Jun 2014

This year’s GCSE cohort has a greater range of next steps available to them than ever before. University is now an achievable ambition, rather than being the preserve of the privileged; and apprenticeships are increasingly given the respect they deserve in a competitive job market, with businesses vying to recruit the brightest young talent.

However, current employer plans suggest we will need to fill 13.5 million job vacancies in the next 10 years but only 7 million young people will leave school and college.

This means we need to support more people to stay in work longer and to bring more people of working age back into work.

We have chosen this week – Adult Learners’ Week (14 – 20 June) – to launch our 2015 General Election manifesto, because we want a skills-led economic recovery which brings prosperity to a wider group of people.

Skills education must be embedded in the national agenda and the ambition is to see a culture shift which results in people investing in their learning.

It is critical for the economy that we offer skills provision for people of all ages, not just those aged 16 – 24.

Working life for an 18 year old today will probably last over 50 years and require training and retraining many times. The skills for someone entering the labour market today are unlikely to stay current for half a century.

Unfortunately though, the education and skills system we have in the UK is not designed to meet this challenge.

At all levels, many young people – through learning – to enter into good jobs via higher and further education and through a growing apprenticeship programme.

The vast majority of government funding is focused on the initial transition from school to work, clearly a critical phase to get right.

Many employers fund training and development of their workforces but too many do not, and there is little culture in the UK of people investing in their own learning after higher education.

This is why our first call for action in our manifesto is for there to be an independent review into the UK’s long-term skills needs and funding issues.

We want skills policy to get the thorough inquiry which pensions and adult social care have had in recent years – looking at the needs, the pressures, the system, the funding and the opportunities of helping our society to support more people to learn and have opportunities to train throughout their lives.

We have a range of immediate priorities as well: for the next Government, these are designed to give more power and support to every adult to take more control of their learning throughout their lives.

We need to see a culture shift which results in people investing in their learning and development in the same way as wanting people to invest in a pension pot.

Investing in skills across the 50 year career should mean higher wages, and a longer and more productive working life: surely that is as important as guaranteeing money away in a pension pot.

We think it is and that the Government has a role in enabling and encouraging that end through Personal Skills Accounts which attract tax relief.

Critically we want adults to have access to career reviews in which they can have the support to understand how skills development can help them.

Another of our manifesto priorities follows on from our recent Family Learning Inquiry. We found that family learning has a positive impact by raising children’s attainment as well as helping adults gain the confidence they need to become learners again.

The results are often staggering for many people; improving life chances and encouraging social mobility.

One of our Adult Learners’ Week award winners for this year joined a family learning course because she was keen to provide the best possible care for her grandchildren.

Although she was initially very shy, the confidence she gained inspired her to widen her learning horizons, and she is now on her way to becoming a special needs teaching assistant.

The skills that are gained through family and other types of learning push adult learners beyond what they first thought they were capable of.

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) Adult Participation in Learning Survey shows that those who stand to benefit most from learning – those who are unemployed or who left school at an early age with few qualifications – are least likely to do so.

Or, to put it a different way – those who benefited most from their initial education in terms of employment, income, health and well-being continue to learn, whereas those who did not do well in education in early life stay away from learning opportunities presented to them as adults.

We want to change that, because learning new skills is vital as people live and work longer.

We all need to be given the tools and support to carry on learning so that we can adapt and flourish as work and life changes.

We must invest in people now to safeguard the future of our economy and of our society.

David Hughes, Chief Executive of NIACE
ADULT LEARNERS’ WEEK 2014 – WINNERS’ STORIES

Learning later in life to tackle the skills shortage
Wednesday, 18 June 2014 10:52

National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) Annual Adult Learners’ Week Policy Conference on 19 June provides the opportunity for debate and discussion on the role of lifelong learning and the importance of continual learning to address the skills shortage. The conference is attended by key political figures and key representatives across the education industry.

David Hughes, Chief Executive of NIACE, said:

"While the economy is improving, it is still fragile and as the recent Employer Skills Survey by UKCES reported, the level of skills-gaps in workplaces across the country is a danger to lasting growth. There is a crucial role that skills and lifelong learning has to play in ensuring that we build a sustainable recovery for all." With a skills gap that is widening, there is not one answer to fix this problem. We know that we need to be working with young people in schools so that they obtain independent career advice on the best route into professions. We also know that we need to be marketing science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects so that they appeal to younger generations and more young people embrace these core subjects.

It is also crucial that we need to be working more closely with employers across industry sectors to enable them to grow talent from within their organisations using the right qualifications to enhance business performance. Employees need to be encouraged to develop skills and expertise to fill 'skills gaps' where possible.

There is also the issue of supporting those who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) and helping people into work or inspiring them into training. While the latest report from the ONS tells us that unemployment has slightly fallen, there are still over two million people out of work.

The 2013 NIACE Adult participation in learning survey, while not surprising, told us that higher socio-economic classes are more likely to have participated in learning and that older people are less likely to take part in learning. I do feel that we need to be working harder to encourage lifelong learning amongst all age groups but especially older learners, giving them new skills to enhance or consolidate the experience they have gained.

Progression is key and evidence shows that those who do study often continue to do so, continuing into other courses and qualifications. We certainly see that with AAT students and learners that have come back to the classroom. Many start a qualification with us and enjoy it so much they continue on their journey, studying until they feel they’ve reached their true potential which in many cases is gaining chartered status!

Adult Learners’ Week provides a platform to celebrate and showcase phenomenal success stories and we hope encourages those contemplating a course or qualification to take that initial step and do it!

As a professional membership body, we are always encouraging investment in CPD. We engage with council’s adult education and learning services across the UK with the task of improving skills. Not only is this a key driver to address social mobility but also accountability, business and financial skills are essential for any company and highly sought after. Those who have achieved an AAT qualification know they have the skills and knowledge that is valued by employers.

By working with councils up and down the country, we are able to work with a variety of adult learners that are returning to the job market, career changers or from hard to reach communities that are new to the studying and the classroom environment.

North Yorkshire County Council is one such council that is up skilling its regional NEET population and adult learners by delivering AAT qualifications and seeing a vast percentage (between 70 – 80%) then gain the confidence to secure job roles in both public and private sector or in a family business. Funding to help with the cost of AAT’s courses may be available depending on individual circumstances.

We need to work hard to get people into work and sustainable employment but much more needs to be done to ensure we as a nation are helping others reach their potential. This is important locally, regionally and for UK plc to be competitive in the future. High quality vocational qualifications have a big role to play to get people of all ages back into learning and to give people confidence to apply for and secure new or more senior roles which is good news for businesses and economic growth.

Andrew Roberts Morris is a regional account manager for the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT)
Why learning new skills is a job for life

With pensions dwindling and the employment market in constant flux, an ageing population needs adult education like never before

What do Brad Pitt and Michelle Obama have in common? It may surprise you to learn that they are both 50 years old. But I think we all agree that they are not reaching for the slippers and the stroller just yet.

Celebrating your half-century is no longer a sign to slow down and potter towards retirement. In fact, with people living longer, the pension crisis forcing us to work later and a struggling economy bringing to an end the “job for life” and, often, resulting in redundancy, many in the 50-plus age group now find themselves facing “situations vacant” adverts.

Retraining, upskilling and refreshing literacy, numeracy and ICT basics are essential to making these workers attractive to new employers. Adult education providers realise this. They run employability-related courses, many of which are funded by the government and thus free to learners. As the demand for new older, skilled workforce increases, providers are now running classes aimed solely at the over-fifties.

“[I]n the next decade, there will be about 12 million job vacancies, partly due to retirement and partly due to growth,” says David Hughes, chief executive of adult education body Niacce. “Yet there are only 7 million young people entering the workforce. So we need to increase labour market participation among adults and extend working life to fill the jobs that are there.”

“We don’t want people working longer in poor jobs. We want them to get the training and skills they need to get decent jobs with decent wages and decent prospects of employment at whatever age.”

Fortunately, research shows that older people are keen to learn. According to a survey by Niacce, more than a quarter of adults aged 55 to 64 consider themselves to be “learners”, which means they are studying or practising something whether it’s at home, online or in an institution.

Although that number reduces with age, a healthy 19 per cent of 65- to 74-year-olds are still learning, as are an impressive 19 per cent of the over-75s.

Employers are also keen to support older people, as shown by the government’s Employer Ownership of Skills pilot. This has involved giving businesses money to spend on training and upskilling their staff as they see fit.

Although the scheme is in its infancy, at present more than three-quarters of the funds are going to workers aged over 50. This suggests that employers value experience and see the benefit of refreshing the skills of seasoned staff members.

One new intervention aimed at supporting older people in their quest to remain relevant in the workplace is the Mid-Life Career Review, which has been trialled by Niacce for a year.

Aimed at 45- to 64-year-olds, the scheme offers advice on education, training and employment. About 3,000 people have taken part in the initial drive and results will be revealed in September.

“We think that, at key points of transition in people’s lives, they should have the opportunity to talk about what’s possible for them,” Hughes explains.

Hughes says that the response to the pilot has been very positive, and that it has allowed applicants to consider the skills they have and accept the adjustments they need to make to cope with a changing job market.

“People learn all the time but they don’t realise that,” he says. “Just telling them that the skills they take for granted are ones they have learned over years gives them the confidence to know they can learn in the future.”

Niacce hopes that eventually everyone will be eligible for a mid-life career review.

New world, old problems

The job market is changing and people have to change with it. We are in a digital age but digital competency is something that many older people fear. Resisting this, the charity Age UK runs computer courses to help learners gain the confidence and skills to use the internet.

Of course, to have good ICT skills, you need good literacy: “More technology in the workplace compounds the problem,” Hughes says. “But the problem is already there, so we know people struggle with literacy and numeracy.”

Not everyone learns because they want to better their chances of employment or to gain a qualification. The University of the Third Age, which promotes learning for its own sake, has experienced a massive boom in its membership, with a steady rise of between 5 and 10 per cent a year. Most members are over 55, some are over 80.

“They come to us because they want to make something new of themselves in later life,” explains spokesman Francis Beckett. “We have no qualifications, no curricula and no teachers. We have learning groups and each one has its leader who organises the learning. This person may be an expert in the subject or simply know a little more than the others.”

Courses are diverse. Although some, such as Anglo-Saxon poetry, wouldn’t be out of place on a traditional syllabus, others, including the history of garden design and the relevance of fairy tales, are less traditional but no less enticing.

The social benefits of learning later on in life are obvious. It can ease loneliness and promote good mental health. Computer skills in particular can enable older people to communicate with others via email or social media sites. Skype grandparent who may live abroad and shop online when they can no longer walk to the supermarket.

After all, unexpected change can happen to anyone. A few weeks ago, David Moyes was let go from his job as manager of Manchester United Football Club and found himself unemployed at the age of 51. His six-figure pay-off no doubt sweetened the pill but not everyone his age will be so lucky.

These days, the old adage that you can’t teach an old dog new tricks is rubbish. It is never too late to learn and, as more opportunities arise for the over-fifties, more importance is being placed on keeping this age group skilled, competitive and relevant in an ageing and ever-changing society.

Katie Bohdanowicz teaches adults in East London
ADULT LEARNERS’ WEEK 2014 – WINNERS’ STORIES

**Telegraph & Argus**

Bradford College student is rewarded for efforts

A Bradford College student who underwent a radical career transformation has won an award at a regional adult learners ceremony.

Saraa Khan, 34, decided to pursue his dream of becoming a Civil Engineer, leaving his full-time job to enrol at Bradford College, all while juggling a hectic family life and two part-time jobs. He won a Learning for Work Individual Regional Award in the Yorkshire & the Humber.

**The Star**

Suicidal man from Clayton-le-Moors saved by love of angling

A VOLUNTEER from Clayton-le-Moors has been honoured with an award after turning his life around.

**The Gazette**

Pick a course... or two or three

Pick a course... or two or three

**The Times**

Inspirational Bexleyheath woman honoured for educational achievements

**The Westcountry**

Prestigious award on the cards for Minehead woman

A WOMAN from Minehead has been picked to win a prestigious award for her remarkable learning achievements.

Oliwa Watkinson, 25-year-old, has won the Learning Life Skills Individual Award as part of Adult Learners’ Week (June 14-20).

Having Down’s syndrome and associated significant communication difficulties meant Oliwa felt vulnerable in the community. But she has been keen to live an independent life and secure employment.

Her love of cooking led her to complete M-Q Level 1 qualifications in food preparation and food safety.
ADULT LEARNERS’ WEEK 2014 – WINNERS’ STORIES

It’s never too late to learn new skills – and start a new career

By Grimsby Telegraph | Posted June 19, 2014

Former nurse and teacher Radha Virahsawmy claims that being a pensioner at university has made her stronger and more confident

A university student has spoken of the importance of education after enrolling onto a course aged 70

Grandmother of three Radha Virahsawmy of Fifth Road in Immingham won an Adult Learners’ Week award after impressing lecturers at Lincoln University.

Digital skills shortfall?

It’s not all about learning on a computer. People learn all kinds of ways and the trick is to make sure that learners are as comfortable and as well as they are to keep learning.

Emily’s hard work pays off

Adult Learners’ Week culminates in London when adult learners from the capital will be recognised for their remarkable learning achievements at the prestigious National Awards Ceremony on Monday, June 16.

Emily Bedford, 41 from Archway, won the Learning for Work Individual Award. She studied jewellery design at City Lit, which has led to her own jewellery business.

Despite juggling her jewellery course (City & Guilds Levels 2 and 3) with looking after her two young sons and developing her business, Emily has thrived in the learning environment.

She said, “This whole learning experience has been a life changer. Business wise it has been fantastic for me, I have managed to pay for the course and all the tools, materials and books solely from my jewellery sales. Now I can take everything I have learned to apply it to my business now and in the future.”
ADULT LEARNERS’ WEEK 2014 – WINNERS’ STORIES

Local Training Provider Supports Adult Learner Week

Free taster sessions encourage Halton adults to develop new skills and hobbies

Free sessions to plan the next five years of your career

Pick up a new skill during Haringey Adult Learners’ Week

Exhibition to mark Adult Learners’ Week at Claverham
Based on an initial evaluation of Adult Learners’ Week 2014, and feedback received to date, it is clear that the initiative has achieved a much higher profile on a national level, with greater public affairs impact and engagement with hundreds of organisations on a local level.

One of the successes of this year’s activity was bringing together new and existing partners across the sector to deliver a Festival of Learning, building one offer for adults to have a go at learning throughout May and June.

Adult Learners’ Week continues to raise awareness of and participation in learning through inspirational stories, engaging events and extensive media coverage.

The wide mix of organisations and individuals that get involved in Adult Learners’ Week help to engage the most hard-to-reach groups.
Planning for Adult Learners’ Week 2015:

- Building on the success of this year’s activity NIACE will work with a range of partners to deliver a two month festival of learning in May and June 2015, culminating in Adult Learners’ Week.
- Adult Learners’ Week 2015 will be held from Saturday 13 June – Friday 19 June 2015.
- NIACE will begin working with new and existing partners in the Autumn to engage them in activity and build impact for 2015.
- The National Strategic Group will meet in September 2014, to discuss the full impact evaluation and to agree the key priorities for ALW 2015.
- A key area of development for 2015 will be building stronger local links, in particular focusing on the LEP areas. NIACE will also be working closely with the Skills Show to link up with local Skills Show Experience activities.