

FE WEEK SUPPLEMENT

ADULT LEARNERS'

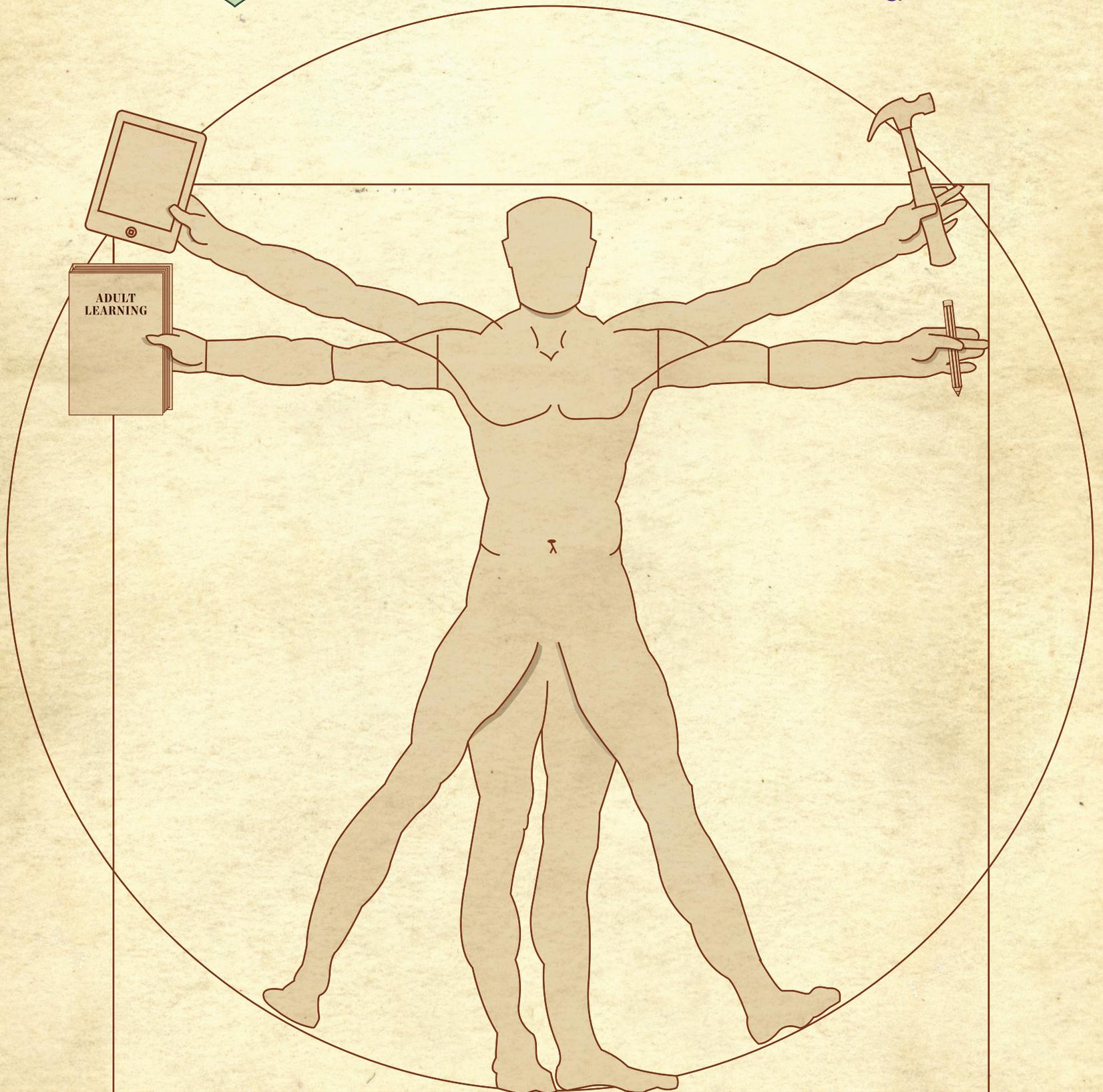
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WEEK



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Welcome to this *FE Week* supplement



Rebecca Cooney
@RebeccaKCooney

Adults return to education for a variety of reasons.

Some want to change career and some want to progress in the one they've got.

Some are looking for a way out of unemployment or a chance to put right what went wrong at school, while some

just want to explore different sides of their personalities and broaden their horizons.

Adult Learners' Week is a chance to honour and showcase the achievements of these learners.

This supplement, produced by *FE Week*, is a celebration of all of those achievements and opportunities, but, amid the celebrations, it is also a good time to reflect on what the future of adult education might look like.

David Hughes, chief executive of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) applauds the way adult education "helps people transform their lives", but admits he feels some "trepidation" looking ahead to the cuts expected in the looming spending review (page 3).

But it's not just learners whose achievements should be recognised, as Christine Bullock, chief executive of awarding body apt awards, points out (page 3), tutors are often "performing miracles" to help their students.

The issue of investment in adult education is picked up by Skills Minister Matthew Hancock (page 4), who highlights research showing that "every pound invested in apprenticeship provision returns at least £18 of value to the apprentice, their employers

and the wider economy," and pledges the government will "go further" to improve the UK's skills competitiveness.

Meanwhile, Shadow Skills Minister Gordon Marsden warns many older learners will be deterred by the 24+ adult learning loans, and points to the less obvious benefits of adult education such as better health, social cohesion and lower offending rates (page 4).

He calls on policy-makers to consider the impact of learning on government departments other than the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills — a thought echoed by Ruth Spellman, chief executive of the Workers' Educational Association (page 5), who says "policy makers need to take a holistic view of how adult education impacts the economy".

For NIACE president Nick Stuart (page 5), the answers to some of these conundrums might be found in Adult Learners' Week itself, and he is chairing a review into what the festival does well, and what it needs to improve to allow tomorrow's adult learners the same opportunities, second chances and experiences that all of this year's winners have encountered on their journey.

Adult Learners' Week is, he says, "the catalyst to bring policy, action and real outcomes together," a chance to inform and

sway policy-makers at the same time as celebrating achievements.

A total of 87 national and regional awards have been given out to individuals and training schemes this year from 1,412 nominations — and we've got some of the inspiring stories of how winners past and present have used education to completely change their lives (see pages 6 and 7).

The week is also an opportunity to encourage more adults to get involved, with over 1,400 events and taster sessions from Indian head massage to plumbing, taking place at colleges, libraries and other venues up and down the country (see pages 10 and 11 for just a handful of these).

The results of the NIACE Adult Participation Survey, revealing who is currently involved in learning and who is not, as well as comment from the survey report's author Fiona Aldridge can be found on pages 12 and 13.

Coverage of the City Lit Adult Award ceremony and a preview of a special celebration event the week, honouring tutors' contribution to adult education are on pages 14 and 15.

So, make sure you stay up to date with everything that's going on this week by following the hashtag #ALW13 or @FEWeek on Twitter.

It's the taking part that counts

Adult Learners' Week rightly celebrates its award winners. But what of the future? With a spending review looming in June, David Hughes wonders what the prospects are for adults who catch the learning bug now

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education strives for a society in which all adults have opportunities to learn throughout their lives. We know that it brings all sorts of benefits for ourselves, our families, our communities, our work as well as for the economy of the country.

Ultimately a learning society will have more people living healthy, fulfilling lives in stronger communities and as part of a more prosperous economy.

Adult Learners' Week is a chance every year to celebrate people who have achieved amazing things. Their stories are truly inspiring: these are people who now have fulfilling careers, who are dynamic members of their communities, who have vastly improved their health.

During the week the publicity we gain and the thousands of local events nudge all sorts of people to have a go at learning, often for the first time in many years. Unsurprisingly, this is often a trigger to go on to more formal learning and on to

achieving great things.

The week's winners achieve exceptional things, often overcoming tough barriers and challenges. But thousands of others have similar stories to tell. Learning for adults is like that - it helps people transform their lives and has many wider benefits.

This year, though, it is difficult not to look ahead with trepidation and to wonder whether our winners will be the exception in the future. With a spending review due in June and with tough cuts looming, I wonder what the prospects are for adults who catch the learning bug now and want to learn over the coming years.

Many adults who return to learning need extra support to get started, latitude to try different things before they find the right route, and understanding when the messiness of life and other responsibilities causes hiccups in their progression.

Many adults don't know what they want from their learning at the outset; that is in part the beauty of it, it opens minds to new ways of thinking, to knowledge, greater self-awareness and to opportunities. My worry is that extra support and time to decide is harder to offer when funding gets tighter.

My greatest fear is that the only learning on offer for adults will become narrow, and prescriptive, that it will presume that, right at the start, they will be able to

make simple, rational choices of which qualification to go for and where they want to get to from.

Adult Learners' Week is critical in reminding politicians about how learning works

Learning for adults has to be more than that; it has to allow people to grow, to develop, to find out about themselves and what they are capable of - it has to help them to learn about themselves and the world around them.

When it does do that it nearly always helps them to achieve other things - to find work, get a better job, to volunteer, to help with caring and so on. Those are the wider benefits of something very personal.

For me, then, Adult Learners' Week this year is critical in reminding politicians and their advisers about how learning



works, what it achieves and what would be lost if funding cuts bite too hard. That's why we invited previous winners to our parliamentary reception and why we have sent invitations to all of our awards ceremonies - both national and regional - to the constituency MPs of this year's winners.

Winners' stories make more of an impact sometimes than a raft of statistics or a myriad of research findings. In the end, I don't really mind what influences the investment as long as it helps other people achieve what our winners have achieved.

David Hughes, chief executive, NIACE

This supplement was produced by *FE Week*, in partnership with apt awards

FE Week is a newspaper dedicated to reporting on news, analysis, jobs and fun in the further education sector.

Editor: Nick Linford
Deputy editor: Chris Henwood
Sub-editor: Jill Craven
Senior Reporter: Eleanor Radford
News reporter: Rebecca Cooney
Designer: Daniel Duke
Operations: Shane Mann
Financials: Helen Neilly

Contributors:

David Hughes Christine Bullock
Fiona Aldridge Gordon Marsden
Nick Stuart Ruth Spellman
Matthew Hancock

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Christine Bullock, left, with Cheryl Baker, ex Bucks Fizz, at an awards ceremony last year

Adult Education Week is a perfect showcase for the transformative power of education later in life and often against the odds, says Christine Bullock

Apt awards is delighted to be sponsoring the *FE Week* supplement in celebration of Adult Learners' Week. Adult learning is at the heart of what we do and this week is the perfect opportunity to explore the many types of learning available to adults from all walks of life.

Everyone's a winner

It is a showcase for adult students for whom education can be transformative. It is always really positive to hear how life changing it can be, not only for the student concerned, but often for his or her family, friends and tutors.

In recognition of this, we introduced the Keith Fletcher memorial award for the most outstanding access to higher education tutor in the South West. The award is in memory of former director, Keith Fletcher, who worked enthusiastically throughout his career to promote widening participation, adult learning and, in particular, access to higher education.

Gillian Wilmot won the award last year. Recently retired, she had worked at Weston College since 1976, and was presented with the award at the college's annual governors' Christmas dinner in December. Gill said at the time: "My job has given me an enormous amount of enjoyment. There can be no greater honour than . . . seeing students achieve their dreams."

This award highlights the role that tutors play in the success of adult learners, many of them performing miracles in the face of diminishing

resources. Families also play an important role in supporting adults in overcoming often multiple barriers to success.

We like to think that we play our part too. Previously trading as Open College Network South West (OCNSWR), apt awards has more than 30 years' experience in developing flexible, credit-based, nationally recognised qualifications that offer bite-sized learning. Our development and growth will always be underpinned by the key aim of widening access to educational opportunities, particularly for adults, that promote social inclusion and community transformation.

We are proud of our access to higher education provision and how it opens doors and opportunities for learners. When we decided to change our name, we wanted to ensure that our new name reflected the type of learners we celebrate and how important access to higher education learners are to us. 'Apt' shows our qualifications are appropriate for our centres and learners but also stands for access, progression and transform.

We provide the tools, but it is the learner who achieves. Therefore, as well as celebrating the success of individual

tutors, we are proud to be the headline sponsor for the South West Adult Learners' Week awards ceremony.

I was very moved by last year's event and was inspired by the stories of the adult learners who overcame adversity and multiple barriers. It reminded me of how proud I was of this often under-appreciated sector.

It also enhanced my view of what wonderful support that we, as an awarding organisation, can and do give. I see it as my role and that of my staff to do everything we can to enable access to learning, and the consequent transformation of lives and celebration of success.

We are also a social enterprise and, unusually for an awarding organisation, give not just awards but grants to centres to enable them to invest in much needed resources. This reflects our total commitment to our learners.

I want to offer my personal congratulations to every single adult learner who has achieved success; they are all prizewinners.

Christine Bullock, chief executive of apt awards

FE Week Experts

Everyone should have a chance to learn



Matthew Hancock celebrates Adult Learners' Week. It is a chance, he says, for people to seek out opportunities they might never have considered before

All of us in the further education and skills sector have a part to play to ensure that everyone in this country, regardless of their background, can be trained in the skills that they need to get on.

Historically we have had a poor skills base – which is the reason why we are engaged in a radical programme of education reforms. We want to emphasise rigour in our institutions and qualifications, and make the whole system more responsive to the needs of the individuals and communities that it serves.

Further education in this country began in the 19th century largely as a reaction against limited access to learning opportunities.

True to that spirit, the message of Adult Learners' Week is that learning can do something valuable for you, whoever you are, wherever you come from, whatever your previous experiences of education.

Adult Learners' Week is England's biggest celebration of learning. It is not organised by the government and it isn't about promoting any individual political agenda.

Much of it is designed locally, to celebrate what communities are doing for themselves.

Everyone should have the chance to learn. The desire to make the best of yourself and fulfil your potential is one of the most laudable human characteristics. This week encourages people to seek out opportunities they might never have considered before.

Employers, too, will be able to find out the advantages that taking on an apprentice, a trainee or improving the skills of their employees can have for their business.

Many people, and in particular young people, are already aware of the career and earning advantages that an apprenticeship can bring. Apprenticeships represent some of the best of vocational education, combining rigorous training with real employment; this week is a chance to find out how to take up one of the more than half a million apprenticeship places that are now on offer every year.

There are also thousands of opportunities for older people, people with learning disabilities or difficulties, people who are homeless, carers and care

leavers, offenders and more, to improve their skills to re-enter the labour market, to progress in careers that may have stalled, or to learn what they need to prepare for a change of direction.

Still more adults will be introduced to a range of learning opportunities for developing skills, confidence, motivation and independence, enabling them to contribute positively to their communities, support their families and do well in their lives.

This week, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education has rightly argued that investment in skills can have a real impact.

Not only can FE courses lift people out of unemployment and increase lifetime earnings, but research suggests that for every pound invested in apprenticeships returns at least £18 of value to the apprentice, their employers and the wider economy.

We are already taking steps to improve the system, but we need to go further to give everyone a chance to reach their potential and avoid being left behind by our international competitors.

Matthew Hancock, Skills Minister

We must keep the doors open for all adult learners

Policymakers need to see adult education and lifelong learning beyond the silo of the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, particularly in these straitened times, says Gordon Marsden

Adult Learners' Week is a great opportunity to showcase the tremendous impact lifelong learning has on communities. My two decades as an Open University and Workers' Educational Association tutor has shown me countless examples of its transformative potential, opening doors for people that they didn't know existed.

It's vital that we continue to protect and champion adult education and lifelong learning, even in these difficult times. I backed the Labour government's decision to safeguard the Adult and Community Learning budget. It was to the credit of the previous Skills Minister, John Hayes, that this safeguard has remained. If Skills Minister Matthew Hancock is serious about lifelong learning, he too must take up this commitment and ensure that it survives next month's spending review.

Regardless of what the review may bring, major storm clouds are looming, not least the introduction of 24+ advanced learner loans this year. As I have warned

before in FE Week, though impact of this policy will be felt for all learners aged 24 and over - and not least women - it seems clear that the pressures could become most acute for those aged over 40. The government's own market research and impact assessments bear this out, with less than one in four of those aged 40 and over saying they will go ahead with their course if loans are introduced.

As the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education rightly argued early on in this process, while the option of an income contingent loan that is written off after 30 years might appeal to an 18-year-old starting university, it has very different implications for someone in their 40s returning to study at an FE college. As their own statistics bluntly illustrate, this government is risking a lost generation of adult learners.

John Hayes acknowledged the problem with the belated announcement of further support for 40+ learners as part of the package of concessions we, along with stakeholders across the FE community, forced from the government last year. But as with their commitment to safeguard science, technology, engineering, and mathematics learning, we have seen little urgency or concrete delivery from ministers.

But even in the current climate we must continue focusing on the tremendous opportunities lifelong learning can offer. Policymakers need to see adult education and lifelong learning beyond the silo of the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills. Other departments should see how its expansion can benefit their public policy aims and, where appropriate, contribute and innovate.

It contributes to social cohesion, that's an issue for the Department of Communities and Local Government. It helps people live longer, more productive lives mentally and physically, that's an issue for the Department of Health. It has helped – and there are countless individual testimonials to this - to bring back offenders into society to productive and positive lives. That's a matter for the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice.

We should also be looking at how we can expand lifelong learning to reach more people, both to increase their fulfilment and because we need their contribution to regenerate our economy. I've seen the excellent work that Union Learn has done in workplaces across England; we should look at how we can harness this expertise to reach out to those people who have felt most distant from learning before and whose lives



could be transformed by gaining new skills.

The demographic pattern in the UK is such that 80 per cent of our workforce of 2020 is already in the labour market; more and more people therefore will be looking to acquire the new skills that they need for the jobs of tomorrow. It's vital that we help to create the right environment to allow lifelong learning to flourish.

Gordon Marsden, Shadow Skills Minister

FE Week Experts

Bringing policy, action and outcomes together

Adult Learners' Week is both a national celebration and a living showcase of how adult learning changes lives, says Nick Stuart

There is nothing like the power of an anecdote to bring alive a policy discussion and give colour to the drab array of statistics that usually substitute for debate. Adult Learners' Week reminds those who make policy what lifelong learning means to individuals. It demonstrates how learning brings a new richness to people's lives; gives new confidence to many for whom learning, let alone qualification, represents an often unimaginable ordeal; and encourages many to re-engage with their communities.

As a director-general, first for lifetime learning under the Conservatives and then for lifelong learning with the arrival of David Blunkett as Education Secretary, I was a regular attendee at Adult Learners' Week. It gave me inspiration and context, and determined where I would put my efforts when I retired from Whitehall.

In 2001, I joined the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE). In numerous ways, NIACE has inspired and pioneered work that has influenced the

Department for Education's thinking.

Over the past two decades, at different times, it has managed innovative community learning programmes funded centrally. These programmes have inspired local initiatives all over the country. They have had their origin primarily, in the work locally that animates Adult Learners' Week and shows how central adult learning is to local cohesion and community development.

This week needs to look forward in anticipation of new initiatives as well as back on the year's achievements

In 1997 and immediately thereafter, policy attention turned to the national disgrace of an adult literacy rate that left almost 20 per cent of the nation with a

reading age of 11. Following Sir Claus Moser's report, A Fresh Start - improving literacy and numeracy, the Government established a major programme to improve adult literacy. In today's more austere times, that work continues.

Sir Claus's analysis was influenced by the work and thinking of the Basic Skills Agency and of NIACE, and underpinned the decision-making and policy development that followed both on adult literacy and numeracy. Recent reports from NIACE carry that thinking forward and have fed into and influenced current government action. Every year, Adult Learners' Week reinforces the case for adult literacy programmes and demonstrates indelibly what can be achieved.

The week acts as a catalyst to bring policy, action and real outcomes together; both to promote what works outstandingly well on the ground and to stimulate new ideas and thinking. It is not, however, simply a one-off week of celebration but rather the culmination of a huge amount of activity, locally and nationally. It needs to look forward in anticipation of new initiatives as well as back on the year's achievements.

I am chairing a review of how Adult



Learners' Week is working. It is already clear that this imaginative festival, widely copied around the world, continues to have enormous vitality and appeal. But after 20 years, it is worth examining what it achieves, which of its many activities works best, and how to enhance its impact so that it beams down even more directly on illuminating and stimulating policy development.

Nick Stuart, president, NIACE



Adult education is about more than employability skills; it impacts the economy in all sorts of ways, says Ruth Spellman

While Adult Learners' Week celebrates the achievements of students whose lives have been changed by adult education, providers need to reflect on whether the FE sector is achieving its goals. These are tough economic times. As providers, we have to focus on the impact we are having and the benefits of adult education to UK plc. The government recently highlighted in its policy paper, Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills, that we are in a global skills race and an effective FE sector is vital to making the UK competitive.

However, the policy focus should not be entirely on employability skills. The effects that adult education can have on

Taking the holistic view

community cohesion, social mobility and families are enormous and often go unrecognised.

A few weeks ago I met one of our learners, Lisa Harrington. She went through a few difficult years after she left school at 15 without any qualifications. But with our local partners, BEST, we gave her the opportunities that helped to turn her life around.

It was not just that Lisa was able to look for work for the first time. It was the impact on her children that struck me the most. She has become a role model for her family, breaking a cycle of education failure and creating a positive learning environment at home.

Family learning courses include cooking, learning through play, and supporting children with English and maths. The adults who achieve maths and English levels one and two are then in a much better position to help their children with homework and to understand any learning difficulties. Teaching reading skills, helping in sentence construction and composition and general written communication is proving a real boon to young people – all the more because their learning is reinforced by positive role models at home and time committed by their parents towards their education.

For adults, getting involved boosts self-confidence, encourages involvement

in other volunteer activities, enables the acquisition of qualifications and enhances their own health and wellbeing. Headteachers have themselves reported children attending school more regularly along with improvements in behaviour and higher levels of achievement in academic studies.

All types of education have a positive impact on the lives of learners

At the Workers' Educational Association we have created four course themes – employability, health and wellbeing, community engagement and cultural education – to see what effect we are having on the lives of learners.

Our research shows that all types of education have a positive impact.

Employability courses helped those in work progress their careers while giving those out of work the confidence to find a job. Our health and wellbeing courses reported a 98 per cent improvement in social and health impacts, with 'life satisfaction'

ratings higher than the national average.

Community engagement courses gave people the chance to make new friends and many progressed on to volunteer work. In cultural education, 84 per cent said they improved at least one skill, such as communication or literacy skills, and 94 per cent of disadvantaged students said they were likely to undertake future learning or training as a result of the course.

We can't achieve these results on our own. That is why we are focused on developing our already extensive links with universities, colleges, trade unions and employers. This will provide new opportunities for learners and raise educational aspirations so that the UK can have a truly world-class FE system. We are also engaging through new social media channels and mobilising support for adult learning to generate more public support for our work.

Policymakers need to take a holistic view of how adult education impacts the economy. As providers, we need to give them the evidence to show adult learning works. Together we can justify government investment in FE and community learning while continuing to meet the skills challenges of a competitive global economy.

Ruth Spellman, chief executive of the Workers' Educational Association

Winners' Stories

Chutney for change

Rebecca Cooney
@RebeccaKCooney

A woman who is running a social enterprise while studying for a degree has won a North West Regional Individual Learner Award.

Rachel Gilkes, 37, from Chorley, enrolled on a degree in social science at Blackburn College in 2011 to help her to return to paid work after having children.

She had done voluntary work with families of offenders, but realised that experience on its own might not be enough.

"I'd had lots of really interesting jobs, lots and lots of experience, but I was always working alongside people who were far more educated than me. You reach a point when you realise that you need to have a bit more paperwork behind you," she said.

"I also wanted to show my children that mums can go to school too - and hopefully inspire them."

Learning gave her the skills and confidence to start Chutney for

Change, a social enterprise that engages disadvantaged people from the community by teaching them to make chutneys and jams from surplus fruit and vegetables donated by growers, markets and retailers.

Rachel first thought of the project, which raises money for the community while helping participants gain new skills, before she started her degree.

"The local community centre ran a playgroup and a unit where older people could come and have lunch. They were about to lose their bus service and so we thought 'what can we do to try and get that money?'" she said.

"By the time we got our act together they'd managed to reinstate the bus. I loved the idea of Chutney for Change though, but couldn't find anyone to come along with me."

While studying a community research project for her degree, Rachel decided to have another go at setting up the enterprise - and it won her last year's National Student Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

Rachel said: "Going back to learning

has absolutely changed my life — it's been full on, but I love it.

"It's opened so many doors and it's helped me with Chutney for Change because I've had to stand up in front of people and talk. I feel more confident, and I've gained research and analytical skills."

Going back to learning has absolutely changed my life — it's been full on, but I love it

Rachel hopes to go on to study for a Master's once she has completed her current course.

Unfortunately she couldn't collect her award herself this week, as she had an



exam the following day.

"The award is a really nice recognition. I'm touched by it, because there are so many other people my age, in my circumstances, doing this kind of thing.

"I think all adult learners with families deserve an award."

Winners' Stories

Rebecca Cooney
@RebeccaKCooney

A former soldier who left the army to pursue a career in film and is now working for Pinewood Studios has won the Learning through Arts, Craft Skills and Culture Individual Award.

Dean Short, 24 and from Manchester, left school with one GCSE but later returned from the army to start a film and television foundation degree at The Manchester College in 2010.

"I didn't have a great time at school because I was getting bullied and I didn't really socialise with anyone. I really didn't open up and begin to discover myself until after leaving school," said Dean.

But, Dean said, he wasn't nervous about returning to education, because his time in the army had helped him to "open up", and given him the confidence to go after his dream job.

"I had a lot of enthusiasm and passion because I wanted to get into the film industry so much. Everyone was saying 'slow down a little bit', it was kind of like shooting a gun — I felt like 'I've got to do this, got to do that, right now'," he said.

"I found the practical learning on the course more helpful than the classroom stuff because I'm an outgoing person compared to how I was at school."

While doing his foundation degree, Dean was diagnosed with dyslexia for the first time.

Danny Boyle was the person who inspired me to get into the film industry

"That was very intriguing because I didn't realise what effect it had been having on me throughout my life but when I was told the symptoms, everything that I was confused about when I was at school and in the army made sense.

"It was this hurdle, this invisible wall that I'd never seen before... and it made me think 'OK, what do I need to achieve to get over those hurdles?'"

With support for his dyslexia and a speech impediment, Dean achieved a distinction when he completed his foundation degree and also managed to get a paid experience on the set of Danny Boyle's Great and Glorious film which played at the beginning of the Olympic opening ceremony.

"Danny Boyle was the person who inspired me to get into the film industry because I met him one day while I was in the army, just a couple of weeks after he'd won his Oscar for Slumdog Millionaire and he made me think 'you've got to get into films', and then my first ever work experience was working with him and it was so much fun."

Dean is now splitting his time between working at the famous Pinewood Studios and doing a BA in film and television at the same college, where he mentors his fellow students.

Winning the award he said, was "amazing".

"It's my first award or recognition for doing something like this and I'm very proud, more than proud, it's still weird, I can't my head round it sometimes.

"When I talk to people they're always saying I deserve this award, and you think 'wow, I do actually', 'It's a momentous



occasion for me but it's a momentous occasion for others as well, because I'm just a normal guy working who's got a passion for the film industry, so I hope people say 'if he can do it, we can give it a try'."

Overcoming adversity through adult learning

Rebecca Cooney
@RebeccaKCooney

A beauty apprentice from Somerset has battled against dyslexia, won a national skills contest, started her own business, looked after a young child - and won this year's Apprentice of the Year award.

Twenty-year-old Emma Rogers struggled at school but began to thrive when she enrolled on an NVQ level two beauty apprenticeship at Weston College. The Cheddar apprentice found that the balance of learning on the job and the support she got from the college allowed her to blossom.

"They just supported me more and helped me to get through the theory, because... you quickly fall behind if you're not helped. It did an awful lot for me," she said.

Emma had baby at the end of 2010, but returned to college just three months after giving birth to Charlie.

"A lot of people said 'do you wish you didn't have him so you could do more?' But he's really just inspired me to work even harder, so I don't agree with that at all," she said.

She completed her level two and moved on level three, working in at a



top Bannatyne hotel and spa (owned by Duncan Bannatyne of Dragons' Den) in between.

In 2011 Emma won her first UK skills competition and has since been shortlisted to represent the UK in Europe, which fuelled her desire to set up her own business.

She said: "I think I always had it at that back of my mind but I was just getting

more successful and better at my job, and I was getting better than the people I was working with who had been training longer than me. I was getting so frustrated that I couldn't use my skill to the full level that I wanted to.

"So about a year ago I started searching for premises and working two jobs to try to get the money so I could practise in my own way."

Emma finally achieved her goal in November, opening her salon, Beauty by Emma, in Wedmore.

She says: "This feels like the start of my life. I've not hit my goal yet — I've so many. I want to specialise in skincare, be really specialised in my beauty therapy career, but then I also want to do other things like helping younger people by promoting education."

This latest ambition, she said, is fairly recent and is a result of the respect she has for "what the people around me have done for me. I think I can do that for a lot of other people."

She said she was "really pleased" to have won the Adult Learners' Week award.

Graham Hasting-Evans, NOCN managing director, said, "Emma's inspirational story is proof that with hard work and determination apprenticeships really do work.

"When learners are given real hands-on experience at the same time as learning the theory, they can go on to achieve great things.

"I'm sure Emma's former employer, Duncan Bannatyne, will be very impressed with her tenacity, as I am. I hope she goes on to open many more salons — who knows? Maybe one day she'll be in competition with the Dragon himself."

Building a career through education



Paul Cano-Lopez managing a construction project in 2001

Rebecca Cooney
@RebeccaKCooney

Paul Cano-Lopez won an individual learner award in 2001, and since then has completed two masters' degrees and now runs his own successful training company.

At 28 Paul, from Essex, was diagnosed with arthritis in his hands and arms, making it difficult for him to continue in his job as a plasterer, so in 1990 he decided to go to Chelmsford College to train for a

Chartered Institute of Building (CIB) site manager qualification.

He said: "At first it was difficult to get back into it, probably the first six weeks were quite hard, your brain's not open for it and you do feel like the class idiot.

"Part of it was that I was older than a lot of the people in the group — I was nearly 30 and they were 20 and their knowledge was different to mine.

"My knowledge had come from working on sites, whereas theirs had come through the college system, but after a few weeks I realised I did know a bit more than I

originally thought."

The first set of exams, he recalled, were difficult.

"I hadn't passed any exams before so that was a bit scary, and they were make or break really. I thought 'If I don't pass these exams that'll be the end of it', but I did and it went on from there," he said.

When he completed the course, Paul became an associate member of the CIB and decided to become a full member by enrolling on a degree in building at Chelmsford College, which he was awarded in 1999.

He then took an MSc in construction management through distance learning, which he was working on when he won his award.

"I did a speech at the national ceremony in London which was nice because it was good to get up and tell people about my history," he said.

The following year he set up Cano Training Services, an NVQ centre which trains people in the building industry to become assessors.

Now 52 and a father of two, Paul said education had changed his life.

"I'm definitely more confident now. The main thing I've got from is it not feeling I have to prove anything to anyone — I know what I can do and what my weaknesses are

and I don't feel pressured into anything I don't need to do," he said.

"Also home life is easier because you haven't got the stress. I run my own business and I wouldn't have what I've got now if I hadn't been involved in the learning."

His own experience with further education inspired him to find out more about education and how people learn.

He started a PhD on learning in industrial settings, which he later converted into a M.Phil and graduated from in 2007, as well as completing a postgraduate certificate in education as part of his research.

"I'm keen to pass the benefits of learning on to others," he said.

"From my own experience and research I found people working in a construction environment don't really want to come in a do a lot of reading straight away, it's just not what they do, so you have to work it round a different way to make learning relevant to their work and a bit of fun as well, rather than just 'back to school', which what they perceive it to be.

"It's breaking down the barriers, that's what we work on as a company, to be able to get people back into education more comfortably."

Introducing apt awards

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Apt awards is proud to be a certified social enterprise with the Social Enterprise Mark, recognising our commitment to reinvesting profits to benefit our learners and the wider community.



ADULT LEARNERS' WEEK

18-24 MAY 2013

“Adult Learners' Week is the perfect opportunity to explore the many types of learning available to adults”

—Christine Bullock, apt awards

JUST A SMALL SELECTION OF WHAT'S ON

20th MONDAY

What: Try a Leisure Course of your choice for free
Where: Weymouth College, Cranford Avenue, Dorset, DT4 7LQ
When: 18 May 2013 - 24 May 2013
More info: Pick one or more of the 50 leisure courses on offer at Weymouth College and join it for free for one session during Adult Learners' Week. Book places by phoning Weymouth College on 01305 208808

What: Singing for Wellbeing Taster Session
Where: The Riverside Centre, The Staithe, Suffolk, NR35 1BF
When: 18:00 - 19:30
More info: We will be using modern and fun songs with breathing and relaxation exercises to explore and demonstrate how singing can be used to benefit physical, mental and emotional health. Anyone welcome, regardless of ability or experience.

What: Read with your kids
Where: The George and Dragon pub, Station Road, Stoke Golding, Leicestershire, CV13 6EZ
When: 15:15 - 16:15
More info: Fantastic session using story sacks to bring book time alive and make reading as fun as it can be. Open to all parents and carers with small children.

What: Making the most of your money and therapy sessions including Indian massages.
Where: Lanchester Road Hospital, Durham
When: 10:00 - 15:00
More info: Learn how to relax, maintain a healthy life/work balance and deal with stress effectively. You can also get tips on effective budgeting and understanding financial jargon. To book a place contact janice.featherstone@nhs.net or 0191 4415752.

ON ALL WEEK

21st TUESDAY

What: CV and application forms
Where: The Eltham Centre Library, Archery Road, Eltham, SE9 1HA
When: 13:00 - 15:00
More info: Come and learn tips and techniques for a perfect CV and application form with a Greenwich Community College tutor

What: Learning for Health & Well Being
Where: Bolton, Bolton Central Library, Le Mans Crescent, Bolton, Greater Manchester, BL1 1SE
When: 10:00 - 15:00
More info: An exhibition where retired visitors can find out about new hobbies, skills or subjects they may have always wanted to do, but never had the time. No need to book - just come along.

What: Vintage Hair with Sarah's Doo-wop Dos
Where: Bedford Central Library, Harpur Street, Bedford, Bedfordshire, MK40 1PG
When: 13:00 - 16:00
More info: Sarah will be giving a demo on creating fabulous vintage hairstyles. No need to book, just come in.

What: Digital Photography Walk
Where: Snibston Discovery Park, Ashby Road, Coalville, Leicestershire, LE67 3LN
When: 10:00 - 13:00
More info: Take a gentle stroll with your camera and start to improve the photo's you take with the help of an experienced tutor, this taster session will also include image manipulation and printing. Pre-booking essential - call 0800 988 0308 and quote HU066E016P

22nd WEDNESDAY

What: Creative Writing taster
Where: Blackheath Library, Old Dover Road, Blackheath, SE3 7BT
When: 14:00 - 15:00
More info: Come along and learn how to construct a perfect piece of creative writing in small and friendly group. To book contact Blackheath Library on 0208 858 1131

What: Lipreading taster session
Where: Sheltered Housing, Sweetbriar Lane, Werrington, Cambridgeshire, PE4 5EA
When: 10:30 - 12:30
More info: A two hour taster session for hard of hearing people, their family and friends to be introduced to lipreading theory and practise in a relaxed environment. To book contact Jenny Holding on 01354 740894 or hldjen@outlook.com.

What: The Bromyard Bake-off
Where: Training Kitchen, H.O.P.E. Centre, Hereford Road, Herefordshire, HR7 4QU
When: First session from 9.30am to 12.00 and the second from 1.00pm to 3.30pm
More info: A fun demonstration aimed at adult would-be bakers of any ability, followed by a Bake-off style contest. We will ask for a small contribution towards ingredients. Call 01885 488495 to book your place and time-slot.

What: Plumbing Taster Session
Where: Leeds College of Building, North Street, West Yorkshire, LS2 7QT
When: 09:30 - 15:30
More info: Free taster sessions for anyone interested in learning some basic DIY skills or those who are thinking about a career in construction.

23rd THURSDAY

What: History of your House
Where: Sandiway Library, Mere Lane, Cuddington, Northwich, Cheshire, CW8 2NS
When: 09:30 - 13:00
More info: Delve into the history of your house. Demonstrations will be given on old maps, census documents, trade directories, electoral registers, and birth, marriage and death records. Drop in basis throughout the morning.

What: Make a sparkly bracelet
Where: Plumstead Library, Plumstead High Street, Plumstead, SE18 1JL
When: 10:00 - 12:00
More info: Come along and make a beautiful memory wire bracelet with a Greenwich Community College tutor. To book contact Plumstead Library on 0208 854 1728

What: Japanese Language Workshop
Where: The Beaney, 18 High Street, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 2RA
When: 10:00 - 12:00
More info: Free Japanese Language workshop with Naomi Madeley which provides a taste of our Japanese Language classes for beginners. Spaces are limited. To book call 0845 606 5606 or online on www.kentadulteducation.co.uk quoting course code AT020-CAN-12-05154

What: Taster Session: Carving
Where: The Hepworth Wakefield, Gallery Walk, Wakefield, WF1 5AW
When: 17:00 - 20:30
More info: Experiment with carving techniques used by Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore to make a sculpture in soap or clay. Drop-in any time, no previous experience necessary. To book contact learning@hepworthwakefield.org or call 01924 247398.

24th FRIDAY

What: Seniors' Free Talk: Making Your First Movie at 60
Where: BFI Southbank, Belvedere Road, Southbank, London, SE1 8XT
When: 11:00 - 13:00
More info: A screening of Chaand Chazelle's debut, Throw of a Dice, followed by a discussion about the challenges of low-budget independent filmmaking late in life. Free to over-60s, otherwise £5.00. To book call 020 7928 3232.

What: Short of Cash? Discover Ebay
Where: The Watermark, Ivybridge, Devon, PL21 0SZ
When: 09:30 - 12:30
More info: Introduction into using Ebay. Enrolment must be made by calling Devon Adult and Community Learning 0845 155 1014.

What: Fired Glass
Where: The Adult College, White Cross Ed Centre, Quarry Road, Lancashire, LA1 3SE
When: 10:00 - 12:30
More info: A taster course. To book contact Lancashire Adult Learning on 0845 600 1331.

What: A Date with Charles Dickens
Where: Sanderstead Library, Farm Fields, Sanderstead, Surrey, CR2 0HL
When: 16:30 - 17:15
More info: Characters from Dickens' novels brought to life with animated readings as performed by Dickens himself, performed by Chris Wood (Victoria Wood's brother). Suitable for families. Contact Sanderstead Library on 02087266900 to book a free ticket.

For more events go to: alw.org.uk/events

The NIACE adult participation in learning survey 2013

Adult Learners' Week offers much to celebrate, explains Fiona Aldridge, but the results of a national survey also provide a sober reminder of the ongoing need to make the classroom an attractive proposition

FE Week expert

Adult Learners' Week has two main highlights for me. Firstly, the compelling stories we hear from award winners about how learning has enabled them to transform their lives.

Secondly, the findings of our annual survey on adult participation in learning which show, at a national level, what proportion of adults take part in learning, alongside details of who participates and who doesn't.

I am particularly excited about the inspirational stories of the three learners who have won our Learning for Work Awards (supported this year by the National Open College Network).

Many nominees we heard from had left full-time education with a sense that



learning was 'not for them', not enjoyable and not relevant to their lives.

Having returned to learning as an adult however, they have experienced the success and benefits, both at work and in their wider lives, and are hungry for more.

Each one of these stories illustrates what the survey tells us year after year — that the majority of adults who are engaged in learning plan to continue in the future.

Most people with little or no experience of learning as an adult have no intention of taking part.

The 2013 survey shows that around two-fifths of adults have taken part in learning in the previous three years, while a similar proportion have not done any learning since leaving full-time education.

This level of engagement is not evenly spread across the adult population. Participation is determined by a range of factors — age, employment status, social class and prior learning.

While this year's survey shows no change in the overall levels of participation and little change in the patterns of participation from last year, two particular sets of figures do stand out. Firstly, while it is generally true that older people are less likely to be learning, the 2013 survey shows a surprising and substantial fall in the proportion of young

adults taking part (a fall of 9 percentage points among those aged 17 to 19 and 5 percentage points among 20 to 24-year-olds).

In a climate of high levels of youth unemployment, these figures are of considerable concern. Research shows that for young adults who are not in education, employment or training the impact can be devastating and can continue well into their adult lives.

Secondly, while the survey shows a welcome increase in participation among part-time workers (from 42 per cent to 48 per cent) there is a worrying decline among unemployed adults (from 41 per cent to 35 per cent).

A greater appetite for learning among part-time workers might reflect, in part, the growing number of 'underemployed' adults who are looking to improve their skills to enable them to take on further part-time employment or move to full-time employment. If this is the case, then it is important to ensure that relevant learning opportunities are offered on

a flexible basis in order that they are accessible to adults who may have other substantial commitments.

Much more challenging though is the decline in participation of unemployed adults (to the lowest level since the survey series began in 1996).

Given the vital role that learning and skills play in helping unemployed adults to gain and progress in work — as outlined in NIACE's recent publication *The Work Programme: What's the role of skills* — this is of particular concern.

As is often the case with large quantitative surveys, the data provides us with as many questions as answers. We will be undertaking further analysis of the data, which we will publish later on in the year. Meanwhile we can only hope that those who think learning is not for them will be inspired by this year's award winners and take the step towards a brighter future.

Fiona Aldridge, head of learning for work, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education

Fall in unemployed adults learning

Rebecca Cooney
@RebeccaKCooney

The chief executive of NIACE has said some of the results of the 2012 Adult Participation in Learning Survey "paint a very worrying picture".

The survey showed the proportion of unemployed adults learning had fallen by six percentage points from 41 to 35 per cent since last year (highlighted below), the lowest level since the survey began in 1996.

It also showed a seven per cent fall in the proportion of young people aged 17 to 24 taking part in learning.

NIACE chief executive David Hughes (pictured) said: "Obviously for a survey like this all you get is bald statistics and you have to speculate as to why.

"This could be a sign that some unemployed young people and adults are becoming hopeless about their prospects to get proper, sustainable work, and think it's not worth getting skills because they'll never get jobs, even with skills, that will be fulfilling, rewarding and pay them enough to live well," he said.

"I'm not saying I know the reasons for these figures, but if you start thinking about it, you paint a very worrying picture at the very least."

Paul Warner, director of employment and skills at the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP), agreed the drop in unemployed people learning was "concerning".

"It's why we support real flexibility within the adult skills budget for providers to offer skills training to the unemployed, despite the pressure on budgets," he said.

"Providers across the country are making strenuous efforts to join up their skills and employability provision and it's important that the funding system doesn't discourage this."

The AELP has previously expressed disappointment that traineeships would not be on offer to 19 to 24 year olds, arguing the programme could act as a stepping stone to lifelong learning.

Mr Hughes agreed there could be a benefit to extending traineeships to up to the age of 24, or even beyond.

"There are older adults, particularly in a position where they haven't got much work experience or their job prospects are in a different sector to their previous experience, and it seems very logical to give them work experience in a sector where there are jobs," he said.

"Used in a targeted way it could be quite powerful in helping them get motivated and to think about the skills they might need to think about getting a job in that sector."

He added that enabling those on traineeships to receive benefits or wages would encourage them to access learning in this way.

The Association of Colleges (AoC) joined calls for traineeships to be extended to adults, but pointed out that its own survey, published in April, showed



on average 82 per cent of colleges saw the number of unemployed students increase in 2011/12 and 75 per cent anticipated a further increase this year.

Julian Gravatt, AoC assistant chief executive, acknowledged the two surveys had been measuring different things, with NIACE taking account of self-supported, as well as government-funded learning.

"The fact that participation by unemployed people is down is probably a sign of the pressure they are now under to find work," he said.

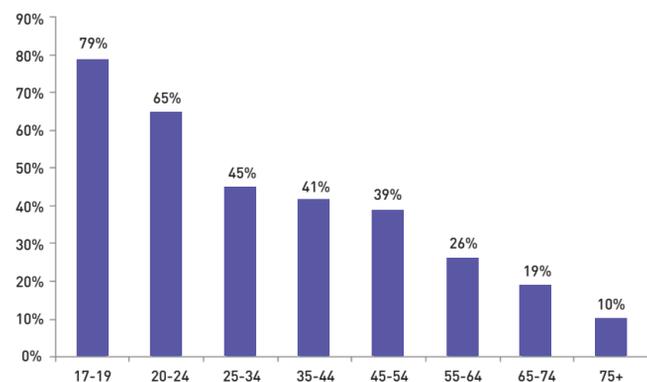
He said the AoC's findings reflected colleges' efforts to engage with and design programmes for the unemployed.

"Colleges are keen to do more for unemployed adults and look forward to the point where they can use traineeships for young adults to support these efforts," he added.

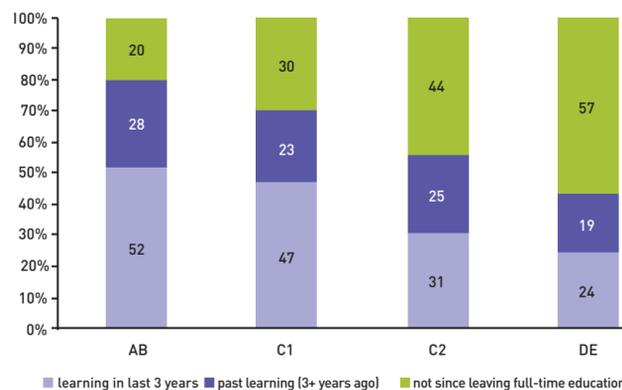
Mr Hughes added the problem was not solely up to the government to solve. He said: "We are also calling on employers to play their part in this."

"We genuinely think employers need to do more to offer and provide meaningful work experience and that's going to be a major part of the solution."

Participation in learning by age, 2013

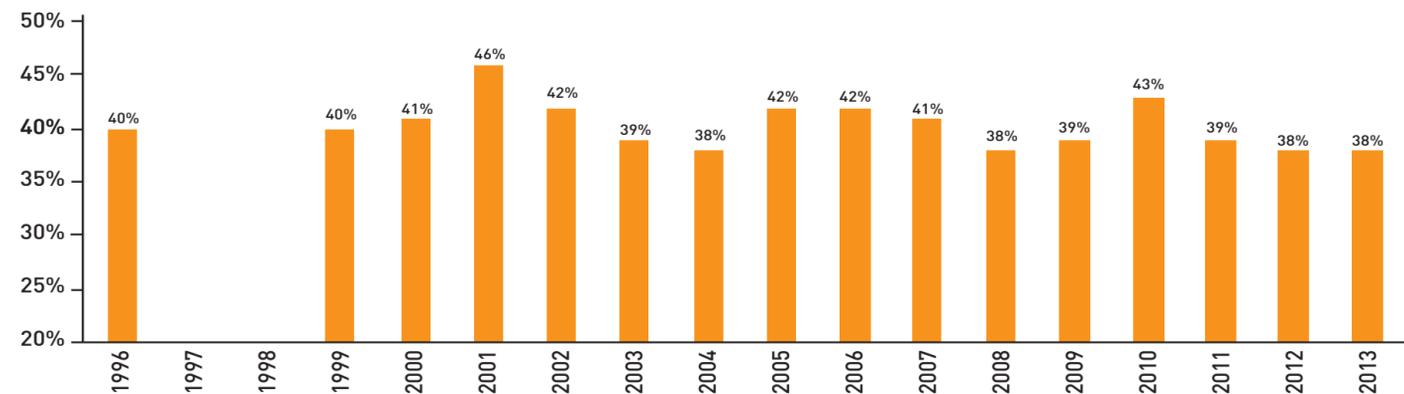


Participation in learning by socio-economic class, 2013

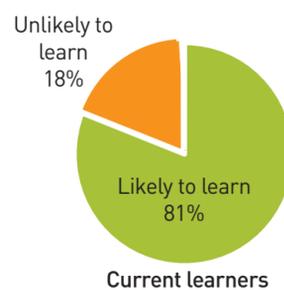


Social Grade A includes the upper and upper-middle classes and is generally grouped with Grade B, the middle classes. Grade C1 includes the lower-middle class, often called white-collar workers. Grade C2 mainly consists of skilled manual workers. Grade D comprises the semi-skilled and unskilled working class, and is usually linked with Grade E, those on the lowest levels of subsistence such as old age pensioners and those dependent upon welfare benefits.

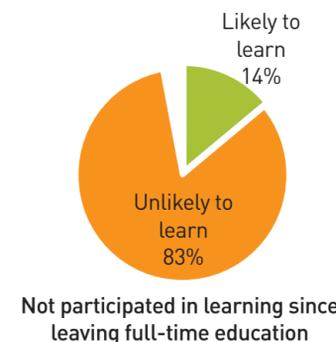
Adult participation in learning (aged 17 and over), 1996-2013



Future intentions to take up learning, by learning status, 2013



Future intentions to take up learning, by learning status, 2013



Participation in learning by employment status, 2013



"Since 2012, there has been a substantial increase in the proportion of part-time workers who are taking part in learning (from 42% to 48%) while the proportion of unemployed adults learning has fallen from 41 to 35 per cent."

Adult awards

X-traordinary achievements

This year's City Lit awards saw more than 30 adult learners receive recognition for their accomplishments. Chris Henwood went along to find out more

Chris Henwood
@Chris_Henwood

Dozens of adult learners enjoyed a touch of Hollywood glamour as they collected prizes at an annual awards bash in London.

Gillian Anderson, who played FBI special agent Dana Scully in The X-Files, dished out certificates at the City Lit ceremony.

She said: "I get asked to do a fair number of these sort of events throughout the year, but based on my schedule and a very real fear of public speaking, I generally respond with a polite 'no'.

"But when I was asked if I would consider this event I started to look through the breakdown of what City Lit does and the lives that it impacts and I thought most certainly this was one event I should attend.

"And being here, hearing how City Lit has extended opportunities to people, I'm overwhelmed — it's an extraordinary gift to the community."

More than 30 awards were handed over, including two special presentations to two 'outstanding learners' picked by the national Adult Learners' Week judging panel.

One of these winners was 45-year-old Usman Choudhry, who has overcome a stammer having taken a number of speech therapy courses.

"Since attending courses in areas such as assertiveness and public speaking, I have helped set up a public speaking group aimed at stammerers, arranged an awareness-raising course for staff at the bank, raised money for the British Stammering Association, and helped organise their London open day in 2012," he said.

"With the help of my fellow City Lit students, we have given people who stammer the confidence to speak out and be heard."

Rachel Everard, City Lit speech and language therapy coordinator, said: "Usman first attended in 1985 as a 17-year-old and as the result of this life-changing course, started a successful career at the Bank of England.

"Over the intervening years he has returned to City Lit for various different courses and it has been my pleasure to get to know Usman and see him develop into a highly articulate, self-motivated person, full of energy and purpose striving to improve the lives of others who stammer."

And Jason Putman, 39, received the other 'outstanding' learner award. He had been homeless for more than 20 years, before studying for a level two certificate



Gillian Anderson presents Aimee Stein her City Lit adult learner award. Also pictured is Aimee's tutor, Joanne Haywood. Picture courtesy of City Lit

supporting vulnerable people.

"I was so fearful when I arrived that I nearly didn't walk through the door," said Jason.

"But I'm so happy now that I did. By the end, I had a qualification, experience, confidence and, most importantly, a job."

Learning for adults can and does change lives for the better

He added: "I've been able to transform all that negative life experience into something positive."

Wendy McKaig, head of programme for community projects, said: "Jason was one of the students who could be a complete nightmare and an inspiration in the space of half an hour — he was exhausting and invigorating in equal measure.

"But he was definitely worth the effort, because what really shone through was a real motivation to learn and improve; a passion to work with homeless and



Gillian Anderson presents Fadua Laaouiti a City Lit adult learner award. Also pictured is City Lit Fresh Horizons programme manager Anne Hartree. Picture courtesy of City Lit

vulnerable people."

Among the evening's other learners to come in for praise, having been nominated for the outstanding student gongs, was grandfather James Anderson, 66, who has studied Italian, Spanish and French at City Lit having left school more than half a century ago with no certificates.

Also recognised were 26-year-old Aimee Stein, who battled personal health issues with fatigue as she achieved a distinction in her City & Guilds qualification in structured jewellery, and Fadua Laaouiti, 34. She balanced single-handedly raising

three children while doing GCSEs and then an access course in pursuit of her dream to become a teacher.

City Lit principal Mark Malcomson said: "Learning for adults can and does change lives for the better, and hopefully this evening shows that through our award winners. Learning can be inspiring and challenging, but it can also be fun and that's something we at City Lit hope permeates through."

The awards took place at Mayfair's Royal Institution of Great Britain on Wednesday, May 1.

honoured at City Lit

NIACE to celebrate teachers

Rebecca Cooney
@RebeccaKCooney

Adult learners are not the only people whose hard work and dedication to education are being recognised this week, as tutors and trainers will be honoured in a special event in London today.

The celebration of teaching staff in the FE sector has been organised by Niace and the Institute for Learning and will take place from 3.30pm at the Queen Elizabeth Conference Centre, just off Parliament Square.

Richard Crabb, head of partnerships and dissemination at Niace, said: "I've been involved in Adult Learners' Week for eight years and one thing our award winners have always talked about is the role of their tutor in their story, so we thought as well as celebrating the winners it would be a good opportunity to celebrate all of the tutors."

At the event, the first of its kind, previous Adult Learners' Week award winners Cheryl Powell, Herbert Goredema and Frank Harris will tell the audience their stories, highlighting their tutors' roles in their achievements.

"The tutors by and large are the nominators of all of the winners. They probably don't see it themselves but they've helped that learner's journey develop, and the relationship with the tutor is a key one," said Mr Crabb.

"Those tutors have played a really important role in that development and it's a chance for the audience to listen to that and think about how we can work together to make sure that role is recognised to a greater extent through the year."

The key notes speaker for the event will be Baroness Helena Kennedy, giving her inaugural speech as patron of the IFL about the difference tutors make to learners, the economy and society.

Mr Crabb said that although there would be "a little bit of exploration" into how this first event would work, the response had been "very positive", adding that the venue was likely to be full.

"We've got a really good mix of audience members coming so that'll help us have some interesting conversations at the end of it," he said.

"It's just a chance for us to say 'well done' to the tutors, something we don't say often enough in the current climate and it's important to celebrate not just the learners and their journey but the tutors who've helped support the learners through difficult times and encouraged them to go further than they thought they would.

"Everyone deserves to have a pat on the back every now and again."



Clockwise from left: Jason Putman says a few words and accepts his award from Gillian Anderson. Pictures by Nick Linford



City Lit principal Mark Malcomson



Above: Learner Usman Choudhry with Gillian Anderson and tutor Rachel Everard and below: City Lit performing arts students



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