

WAG WANNABES TOLD TO GET GRADES

Learning and Skills Council claims that behind most famous footballers is a qualified WAG

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The ideal accessory for a wannabe-footballer's wife may not be a pair of Christian Louboutin heels or to be on the guest list at Chinawhite but a good set of qualifications to fall back on, according to the Learning and Skills Council.

Of England's highest profile WAGsⁱ, at least 9 in 12 are known to have at least the minimum level of qualifications needed to get on in life (five good GCSEs or the vocational equivalent, such as a Level 2 diploma in Animal Care, Fashion Retail or Aerobic Instruction).

So rather than idealising WAGs for their glamorous lifestyles, the LSC is today encouraging young people to follow their lead by gaining the minimum set of qualifications before leaving learning, whatever they aspire to be.

Top scorers for qualifications include Lisa Roughead (Michael Carrick), who holds a degree in business, and Michaela Henderson-Thynne, on-off flame of Stewart Downing, who is currently studying for a law degree at University.

Wayne Rooney's other half Coleen McLoughlin also holds 10 GCSEs, while youngest member of the squad Melanie Slade (sweetheart of golden boy Theo

Walcott) has recently passed her A-Level exams. Carly Zucker became a qualified personal trainer before meeting her boyfriend Joe Cole, while ex-Oasis manager and current girlfriend of Jermain Defoe, Charlotte Meares, holds A-Levels in psychology, performance arts and sociology.

Whilst ultimate WAG Victoria Beckham has succeeded despite leaving learning with a handful of GCSEs, the LSC is today warning that the odds of following in her footsteps are incredibly thin -- with, for example, the chances of being in a successful girl-band or winning X Factor less than one in 200,000ⁱⁱ.

While dating a footballer may be an appealing route to fame and fortune, it's essential that all young people have the minimum set of qualifications – such as a Level 2 diploma or five A*-C GCSEs – to fall back on.

Girls' Aloud singer and footballer's wife Cheryl Coleⁱⁱⁱ recently criticised young women who aspire to the WAG epithet – but with previous research showing that one in 10 young women believe they'll marry someone rich and a further one in seven feel confident that all they need to succeed is luck, the Learning and Skills Council is today reminding young people that without the minimum set of qualifications, the odds are stacked against them.

Julia Dowd, Director of Learning at the Learning and Skills Council, comments:

“Many young people today believe that fame and fortune is possible without hard work, but what today's findings show is that whatever your chosen career, gaining the minimum set of qualifications is an important first step. There's no need to give up on your dreams, but the reality is that leaving your future down to chance could leave you unemployable or in a low-paid, dead-end job, so what we're saying is that whatever it is you aspire to do, have a back up plan and gain the minimum set

of qualifications – as so many of these young women have done.”

TOP WAGS BY QUALIFICATION^{iv}

1. Lisa Roughead – Degree (Michael Carrick)
2. Michaela Henderson-Thynne -- Undergraduate student (Stewart Downing)
3. Emma Hadfield – Undergraduate student (Gary Neville)
4. Charlotte Meares – 3 A-Levels (Jermain Defoe)
5. Melanie Slade -- A-Levels (Theo Walcott)
6. Coleen McLoughlin -- 10 GCSEs (Wayne Rooney)
7. Alex Curran -- Beauty Therapy Qualification (Steven Gerrard)
8. Carly Zucker -- Personal Training Qualification (Joe Cole)
9. Toni Poole -- Beauty Therapy Qualification (John Terry)
10. Victoria Beckham -- handful of GCSEs (David Beckham)
11. Cheryl Cole – unknown (Ashley Cole)
12. Abigail Clancy – unknown (Peter Crouch)

ENDS

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Notes to editors:

This press release applies to England only.

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 555 16 to 19 year olds. Fieldwork was undertaken between 11th - 18th May 2007. The survey was carried out online.

Learning and Skills Council:

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world class standards. Our vision is that young people and adults in England have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. We work nationally, regionally and locally to deliver this ambition on behalf of learners and employers.

Visit www.lsc.gov.uk/inourhands or call 0800 011 30 30 for more information.

Apprenticeships

- There are currently 250,000 apprentices working in over 130,000 organisations in England alone. They can choose from over 200 career paths in 80 different sectors of industry and commerce.
- Anyone aged 16 and above is eligible to complete an Apprenticeship.
- Apprenticeships provide individuals with a mixture of on and off-the-job training whilst being paid. For employers, Apprenticeships offer the opportunity to improve their businesses bottom line through the tailored, relevant training of highly motivated individuals.
- There are two levels of Apprenticeships:
 - 'Apprenticeships', equivalent to GCSE level, incorporate a National Vocational Qualification to Level 2; key skills and in some cases a technical certificate
 - 'Advanced Apprenticeships', equivalent to A-levels, incorporate a National Vocational Qualification to Level 3, key skills and a technical certificate

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

All 16-year-olds in England from a household with an annual income of up to £30,810 who stay on at college or school are eligible for the EMA. The scheme allows payments of £10, £20 or £30 a week in return for a commitment to study. Additional benefits of up to £500 over two years are also available for meeting certain targets.

For advice and information on how to apply for EMA call 080 810 16219 or visit the web-site www.direct.gov.uk/ema for application packs. For people with speech and hearing difficulties who use textphone, please call 0800 056 5344.

Separate EMA and Apprenticeship schemes are operated by the administrations for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

ⁱ According to Factiva, 660 articles referred to WAGs in national and regional media from July-October 2007. The following were mentioned as follows:

Victoria Beckham – 127 articles

Alex Curran – 87 articles

Cheryl Cole – 69 articles
Coleen McLoughlin – 67 articles
Charlotte Meares – 22 articles
Abigail Clancy – 22 articles
Emma Hadfield – 14 articles
Toni Poole – 9 articles
Carly Zucker – 7 articles
Melanie Slade – 5 articles
Lisa Roughead – 3 articles
Michaela Henderson-Thynne – 2 articles

ⁱⁱ There were 200,000 auditionees for the 2007 series of X Factor, source: <http://www.xfactor.tv>

ⁱⁱⁱ Source: <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/topstories/2007/10/12/it-depresses-me-when-kids-say-i-want-to-be-a-wag-it-s-not-a-job-89520-19939213/>

Mirror.co.uk

^{iv} WAG qualifications sourced from

http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/tm_objectid=17083527&method=full&siteid=94762&headline=it-s-a-game-of-20-other-halves--name_page.html

<http://education.guardian.co.uk/alevels/story/0,,2150600,00.html>

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/court_and_social/the_hitch/article1939585.ece

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/text/print.html?in_article_id=424544&in_page_id=1770

<http://observer.guardian.co.uk/osm/story/0,,1956552,00.html>

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/showbiz/showbiznews.html?in_article_id=359266&in_page_id=1773