

ADULT LEARNING GRANT PROVIDES SKILLS BOOST FOR EAST MIDLANDS FOLLOWING SUCCESSFUL PILOT

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The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) today announces the national roll out of the Adult Learning Grant (ALG), a £35m national investment that will make a significant contribution to improving Leicestershire and the East Midlands skilled workforce. The roll out follows a successful pilot programme in Leicestershire where more than 700 people applied for an ALG in 2006/7.

ALG is a weekly grant designed to help adults studying full-time with the costs of learning. The grant pays up to £30 per week¹ for full time learners aged 19 and over who are studying for their first full level two or level three, which is equivalent to five GCSEs or two A levels.

Already benefiting from the scheme is a Leicester mother of three, who has resuscitated her career by training to become a nurse - with aid from an Adult Learning Grant.

Gail Ogleby, 38 of Leicester Forest East, has just completed the access course to nursing at Leicester College after having a break from the workplace to look after her 18-month old baby. Gail gets £10 a week as an incentive to train. She said:

"I'm entitled to £10 every week, which is a godsend as I can already claim 85 per cent discount on childcare costs, but this extra tenner means I have nothing to pay out! The grant as its great incentive for people to get the skills they need to do the job they have always wanted.

¹ Subject to financial assessment

In fact Gail isn't the only one in her family to be expanding her skills - as from September, it will be an all-learning Ogleby household! Gail explains:

“ My husband James helped inspire me to study again as he's been training to become a paramedic after being a dental technician for many years. My middle daughter, Aimee, 16, is following in my footsteps by also studying the access to nursing course at Leicester College, while both myself and my eldest, Claire, 18 will be starting De Montfort University at the same time – although taking different course! I'll be doing the adult nursing diploma in September. I'm so chuffed to get a place at university and getting the Adult Learning Grant as certainly helped me get to this stage.”

Henry Inman, Partnership Director, LSC Leicestershire, said:

“ 700 people in Leicestershire applied for the Adult Learning Grant during the 2006/07 academic year; and it would be great to see even more apply next year.

“We've been piloting the scheme since September 2003 and the feedback has been really positive. The grant gives people the help they need to get into learning, embrace new skills and improve their job prospects. I hope that many others are inspired by Gail's story.

“ An Adult Learning Grant could help you turn your dreams into reality. To check our your eligibility visit the www.direct.gov.uk/alg or telephone 0800 100 900.”

The Leicestershire pilot campaign, has been a proven success in improving retention, with 93 per cent of ALG learners in completing their courses (above the average of 85 per cent) With an average lifetime salary difference of £185,817² between someone with a Level 2 and Level 3 qualification, it is evident that staying on to finish a course and acquire news skills can make a significant difference.

Developed as part of a new Government initiative to improve the levels of both vocational and academic skills in the UK, ALG is intended to be a helping hand for adults who want to learn more skills, but have certain financial worries.

² The Labour force Survey

Following the challenge set for the UK to become world leader in all levels of skills³, the Government intends to make the UK population fully aware of the learning and training opportunities available to them.

Skills Minister Phil Hope said:

“This Government's sweeping reforms to raise skills and improve people's life chances mean that the Government will support low-income learners to ensure that they are not prevented from participating in learning and training. The Adult Learning Grant is now being extended to full national coverage from this September to help people meet the additional costs of learning.

“ALG will now complement the entitlement to free tuition for young adults aged 19-25 undertaking first level 2 or 3 qualifications - equivalent to five good GCSEs or two A levels. We will ensure everyone has the skills they need for employability and that employers get the skilled people they need for better productivity and the competitiveness of the nation”.

With a continued skills shortage in the UK⁴, ALG will be just one of the new tools available from the LSC that will help generate better career related qualifications which could contribute to a stronger economy for all.

To find out about eligibility, potential ALG candidates should visit Student Services at their local college, call 0800 100 900 or visit the website www.direct.gov.uk/alg

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Notes to Editors

Adult Learning Grant:

The Adult Learning Grant (ALG), a new service from the Learning and Skills Council, is a weekly grant designed to help adults studying full-time with the costs of learning. The grant pays up to £30* per week (around £1,000 a year) for full time learners aged 19 and over who are studying for a first full Level 2 (5 GCSEs at grades A* to C or an NVQ2 or its equivalent) or a first full Level 3 (2 A levels or an NVQ3 or its equivalent) qualification.

The Adult Learning Grant is important because skills shortages continue to have a negative impact on UK productivity and competitiveness in the face of fast-growing economies.

³ (Leitch Review of Skills, December 2006, Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills)

⁴ Figures from the LSC indicate more than a third of adults in the UK do not have a basic school qualification

ALG aims to encourage individuals return to education by offering a helping hand to contribute to things like books, travel and learning materials while they study.

Since 2003 ALG has spread to 24 areas of England.

For more information, go to www.direct.gov.uk/alg

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.

**ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE LEARNING SKILLS COUNCIL BY GNN EAST
MIDLANDS. FOR MEDIA INTERVIEWS CONTACT JO SHEPPARD ON 0115 971 2781
OR GO TO WWW.GNN.GOV.UK FOR PHOTOS OF GAIL.**