

## **Adult learning grant provides skills boost for Bedfordshire and Luton following successful pilot**

<b>Date of issue</b>	25 June
<b>Publication number</b>	01-03
<b>Embargo until</b>	25 June

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) today announces the national roll out of the Adult Learning Grant (ALG), a £30m investment that will make a significant contribution to improving the East of England's skilled workforce. The roll out will follow a successful pilot programme in Bedfordshire and Luton, where 282 people received ALG in the past year.

The colleges, which have been involved in the ALG programme since 2006 in the East of England are **Barnfield College** in Luton, **Bedford College** and **Dunstable College**.

ALG is a weekly grant designed to help adults studying full-time with the costs of learning. The grant pays up to £30 per week<sup>1</sup> for full time learners aged 19 and over who are studying for their first full level two or level three, which is equivalent to 5 GCSEs or 2 Alevels.

Deanne Karaboga used the Adult Learning Grant to carry out a Primary Teacher training course at Barnfield College in Luton. Successfully finishing the course in June, she is now qualified to start an English and Education degree at Bedford University, which will enable her to carry out her PGCE and follow her ambition to be a teacher.

Deanne chose to go back to college after deciding to change her career path. She was unable to carry out the training when she was seventeen after having her first child. The Adult Learners Grant eased the financial pressure of carrying out the course on a full time basis.

Deanne said:

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<sup>1</sup> Subject to financial assessment

“It’s not easy studying full time, when you have family to look after. I heard about grant at the college freshers week after I’d started my course. The extra cash really helped with the extra costs of travel and study books. I was even reimbursed for the months when I hadn’t used the grant. For those in my situation I’d recommend the ALG. It’s helped my life move forward and I’m now doing what I’ve always wanted to do.”

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.

Following the challenge set for the UK to become world leader in all levels of skills<sup>2</sup>, the Government intends to make the UK population fully aware of the learning and training opportunities available to them.

Suzie Webb, Area Director for Bedfordshire & Luton Learning and Skills Council said:

“We found that many people felt held back in their careers by a lack of skills, but often financial problems stopped them from learning these skills. In pilot areas such as Bedfordshire and Luton, ALG has already started to help people cross this barrier with 282 people already receiving ALG. It’s been great to see that 95 per cent of people involved in the pilots have applied for courses that teach job-related skills that will help them progress in their careers. “

The 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 £185,817<sup>3</sup> between someone with a Level 2 and Level 3 qualification, it is evident that staying on to finish a course and acquire new skills can make a significant difference.

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

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<sup>2</sup> (Leitch Review of Skills, December 2006, Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills)

<sup>3</sup> The Labour force Survey

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 5 good GCSEs or 2 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 UK<sup>4</sup>, 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](http://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.

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](http://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

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

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.

**Media Enquiries**

**For further information, case studies or photography, please contact:**

Ellie Morley  
Hill & Knowlton  
020 7973 5923

[ellie.morley@hillandknowlton.com](mailto:ellie.morley@hillandknowlton.com)

**Issued on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council by Government News Network East. For further information, please contact Adele Williams on 01223372785**