

Adult learners in Essex urged to gain a few pounds in the New Year with Adult Learning Grant

ALGNY 01-2009

22 December 2009

For many people in Essex, the New Year will be a time to focus on losing a few pounds. But the Learning and Skills Council is doing the exact opposite by helping people add a few pounds, to their bank balances, through the Adult Learning Grant (ALG).

ALG can offer up to £30 per week to adults aged 19 and over, who go back into learning and training, to help out with those extra costs - from travel and books to materials and childcare.

23 year-old Rachel Harle from Hockley in Essex is already taking advantage of ALG. She is currently doing an Access to Higher Education Course at Chelmsford College and is in the process of applying to Anglia Ruskin University to do a three-year degree in midwifery.

Rachel said:

“I always wanted to be a midwife but when I was at school I didn’t think I had the brains to do it. So when I left at 16 with a few GCSEs I had no idea what I was going to do. I tried a Beauty Therapy course but realised that wasn’t for me and ended up trying different jobs like working in pubs and call centres.

“Some of the jobs were great and all of them have given me the life experience and confidence I needed. I’ve grown up an awful lot in the last seven years and I

realised I must do something about achieving my goal or it wasn't going to happen.

"But I wasn't sure how to go about it, so I went onto the Directgov website and from there found the number for the Careers Advice Service. I spoke to a very helpful man who told me about the Access Course and about ALG and he gave me a plan of action. He also recommended Chelmsford College even though it's quite a long way from Hockley. The College has been fantastic and the course is going really well. I'm now putting together my UCAS form for next year.

"ALG has definitely been a huge help. It's a real comfort knowing that it's going into my bank account each week. And it's really helped me out with the petrol costs."

You can use ALG to study for a wide range of qualifications, including BTECs, NVQs, GCSEs and A-levels across a huge range of subject areas: from business to construction, science to hairdressing and childcare to publishing. Wherever you want to be in life, you can find the course for you.

Since the national roll out of ALG in September 2007, more than 72,000 people have benefited from the grant.

So if you are thinking about improving your skills by going back into learning in 2010, now is a good time to start looking at your options and find out if ALG could really help you too.

Janice Logie, Area Director for the Learning and Skills Council in Essex, said:

“Whatever you want to do, having the right qualifications can give you a real head start. People who go back to learning later in life often find that they’re more focused and determined than they were the first time around, and tend to have a clearer idea of what they want to study.

“However, costs for things like books, materials, transport and childcare can discourage them from taking that first step. The Adult Learning Grant, of up to £30 a week, is a great way of making learning more affordable and helps people focus on getting where they want to be in life.”

To find out if you could be eligible for the Adult Learning Grant, visit www.direct.gov.uk/alg or call the learner support line on 0800 121 8989.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

Learning and Skills Council (LSC)

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.

Adult Learning Grant (ALG)

The Adult Learning Grant (ALG) is a weekly payment of up to £30 per week (subject to income assessment) designed to help low income adults in England, aged 19 or over, with the costs of learning.

Adults are eligible to receive ALG providing:

- They are 19 or over and studying in England
- They are on a course leading to their first full Level 2 qualification (equivalent to five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C or NVQ level 2) or their first full Level 3 qualification (equivalent to two A levels or NVQ level 3).
- They are studying full time - around 12 hours a week (equivalent to 450 hours of 'guided learning' a year) - and attending their course regularly.
- They are doing a course at a learning provider funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC).
- They had income of £19,513 or less if they are single or £30,810 or less if they are married or living with a partner during the previous tax year (2008-09).

Adults can apply if they are working part-time (as long as this doesn't affect their eligibility – see above) and if they are claiming most 'in work' benefits, like Adult Education Bursaries, Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit.

They will not be able to get ALG if they are claiming 'out of work' benefits such as Jobseeker's Allowance or if they are in receipt of Income Support. There are some exceptions – check 'The Adult Learning Grant and your benefits' section on www.direct.gov.uk/alg for details.

For all public enquiries regarding ALG, please contact 0800 121 8989 (some mobile operators may charge for calls made to this number) or visit www.direct.gov.uk/alg

**Issued on behalf of the Learning & Skills Council by COI News & PR East.
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