

Adult Learning Grant celebrates second birthday - Lowestoft student heads in right direction for career success -

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The Adult Learning Grant* (ALG) celebrates its second year as a national scheme this year, following several years as a successful pilot. Cheryl Manners from Lowestoft is one of more than 78,000 people who have received financial support to help them re-train or learn a new skill since ALG first began.

ALG, a weekly grant of up to £30, helps people cover the costs of learning. While the scheme already supports many people going back into learning, there are still thousands more who could get real help to learn new skills – for work, a new career or to help build confidence.

A survey of over 3,000 people** shows that over one in three people in Norfolk claim they think it would be worthwhile in the long run to get another qualification. In fact, 25 per cent of respondents in Norfolk felt that learning could get them the job they really want.

The biggest obstacles preventing people in Suffolk from considering taking up learning were cited as not having enough money (33 per cent), time constraints (25 per cent), a lack of self-confidence (18 per cent), feeling too old to retrain or pick up a new skill (10 per cent) or a fear of failing (7 per cent).

Cheryl Manners, 34, and mother to four children, has just finished the second year of a hairdressing course at Lowestoft College.

"I've always wanted to learn how to be a hairdresser but I could never afford the course fees, or the cost of someone looking after my children. She gets the weekly Adult Learning Grant as well as up to £175 a week from the new Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work Scheme to help pay for her youngest daughter's nursery costs."

"The staff at Lowestoft College are amazing – they are so supportive. If anyone feels stuck in a rut at home with small children and wants to do what they can to change their life, I'd recommend they contact their nearest college and find out about the help that's available.

"I did, and next year I'm going to be able to pursue my dreams at last."

Caroline Neville, Regional Director of the Learning and Skills Council in the East of England:

"Learning new skills are vital in whatever job situation you're in, whether you are seeking work or wanting to get on in your current job. Adult Learning Grant provides that vital financial support to help adults access learning that can make you more competitive and more fulfilled in the workplace."

Notes to editors:

If you would like to interview Cheryl Manners please call Liz Trott at COI News & PR on the number below.

* ALG is available to low income adults in England aged 19 or over who are studying full time for a first full level 2 (5 GCSE's 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.

**Research was commissioned by the Learning & Skills Council in April 2009, 3,323 adults aged 18-56+ took part.

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