

## **HACKNEY GIRL EYEING HOTEL CAREER HAS NO RESERVATIONS ABOUT LEARNING SUPPORT SCHEME**

*Adult Learning Grant - one year on*

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Today is the first anniversary of the national roll-out of the Adult Learning Grant, which offers people aged 19 and over up to £30 per week to go back to or continue in learning. Initially piloted across the UK in 2003-2006, the scheme was so well received that nationwide introduction was brought forward a year.

Just one example of the potentially life-changing effect of the ALG is Fatou Gaye, from Hackney.

At a time when financial pressures threatened to derail her ambitions, the ALG has helped Fatou continue her studies and stay on track for a career in the hotel industry.

Born in Gambia, Fatou, now 20, spent her infancy in Sweden and came to the UK three and a half years ago. She has been studying for a BTEC National qualification in Travel & Tourism at Hackney Community College, and began receiving the ALG last September. Previously, she had been getting the Education Maintenance Allowance, but had passed the upper qualifying age and wondered how she could carry on in learning without further support.

Fortunately, the ALG was available to her, and now, nearing the end of her course, Fatou will be going on to Thames Valley University to study hotel management. She dreams of owning a global hotel franchise. Before that, though, the opportunities created by the London Olympics have Fatou setting her sights on a job in hotel management during 2012.

While working to achieve the qualifications she needs to turn her dreams into reality, Fatou has been working part-time as a sales assistant. She admits it can be difficult to fit work in around her studies and credits the ALG with helping to ease the strain.

Although she is entitled to use the grant money in any way she chooses, Fatou decided to use it strictly for study purposes. "The ALG has been a huge help to me in terms of my studies," she said. "With the extra money, I can buy the materials that I need to complete my coursework, particularly books. I would definitely encourage other older students to apply for it."

Hackney Community College principal Ian Ashman said: "The ALG gives students who could not otherwise afford it, the opportunity to study at college and succeed in life. It also benefits the college by helping us to retain our students. Fatou is incredibly motivated and has gained qualifications that will allow her to go on to higher education and increase her opportunities of working at the Olympics. "

Since it began, the ALG has provided financial support to 2,543 adult learners in London<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> LSC Adult Learning Grant performance statistics at 21<sup>st</sup> May 2008

Take-up in the first year that the ALG has been available throughout the capital has exceeded expectations by 64 per cent, proving how popular the scheme has become in a relatively short time and the need it is meeting.

David Hughes, Regional Director for the LSC in London, said: "It's fantastic to see the impact the ALG is having and the helping hand it has given so many adults who might have been held back from learning by financial worries. Up to £30 a week can really make a difference when it comes to buying books and other course materials or paying for childcare."

If you are thinking about going back to college it's time to start looking at your options. ALG could help you – to find out if you are eligible, visit [www.direct.gov.uk/alg](http://www.direct.gov.uk/alg) or call 0800 121 8989 today.

**- ENDS -**

#### **Notes to editors**

This press release applies to England only.

#### **Adult Learning Grant:**

The Adult Learning Grant (ALG), 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) (subject to financial assessment) to 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.

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

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 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.

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