

## **HAIRDRESSING STUDENT CUTS LEARNING COSTS WITH ALG**

*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 scheme is Deuzilene “Leni” Coutinho, from New Cross.

Leni came to Britain from Brazil five years ago to improve her English, and has ended up a champion hairdresser, with a career in hairdressing ahead of her, thanks to the ALG.

Leni, 31, is an NVQ Level 2 student at the College of North West London’s (CNWL) hair salon in Wembley Park, but last year her English was so limited she had to enrol on a beginner’s one-year Hairdressing with ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) course.

Despite that, last year, she won the hairdressing section’s Outstanding Achievement Award as best in her class. This year she became a regional champion in the AHT (Association of Hairdressers and Therapists) championships

– the most prestigious hair challenge in FE – going on to win a bronze medal at national level in the Ladies Evening category.

When Leni has completed her Level 3 course next year, she hopes to open a salon with her husband Rildo, once a professional boxer and now a qualified barber.

Her ambitions could easily have been thwarted by lack of money, but the college encouraged her to apply for the ALG.

“I found the College of North West London on the Internet and realised I could easily get there on the tube,” explains Leni. “This is my second year, and I’m so pleased with my course and my teachers – they are fantastic. I never thought I would win these awards.”

Leni feels the ALG has made all the difference, topping up what she earns working an early morning shift at Pret-a-Manger coffee shop in Liverpool Street station.

“The Adult Learning Grant helps me buy hairdressing books, which we really need, and hair products, which are very expensive. It helps me in so many ways. I was so happy to get it and I would like to say a big thank you to the people who chose me, because I could not afford these things without their help.”

Vicki Fagg, Principal of CNWL, adds: “Getting the right advice from a college about financial and other support can make all the difference to any student, even someone as talented and determined as Leni. The ALG has been a really important factor in reducing some of the financial pressures on her and enabling her to cope with her studies so successfully.”

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

Take-up in the first year that the grant 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.

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

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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