

## MANCHESTER MUM FOLLOWS IN HER SONS' FOOTSTEPS WITH HELP FROM ADULT LEARNING GRANT

Date of issue                      21 February 2008  
Publication number                NWR-173

A Manchester mum of five who was inspired to pursue her dream career in criminology with help from an Adult Learning Grant (ALG) after her eldest sons flew the nest is now following in their footsteps and applying to go to university.

Deborah Hickson, aged 42, is now applying for university courses at the same time as one of her children. She is currently finishing an Access Course at Trafford College's Altrincham campus, where she has received an ALG of £30 a week to help with travel costs, and hopes to start at Manchester Metropolitan University in September.

Deborah, who lives in Partington, said: "My oldest two sons leaving home helped give me the extra push I needed to think about my own future. The ALG really helped me realise there are so many possibilities – the world really is your oyster."

If your children are flying the nest, it is not too late to think about going back to college. ALG can pay up to £30 a week towards the cost of learning for adults aged 19 or over who are studying full-time for their first full qualification of five good GCSEs or two A Levels or equivalent, with the costs of learning.

Deborah added: "When I first went for an interview at college, I was worried about my age but I soon realised that people of every age are out there studying. I use

ALG to pay for my travel costs of getting to college, it's made a big difference to my budget and I see it as a personal reward for going back into education."

Janet Jackson, Partnership Director for the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in the North West, said: "The Adult Learning Grant is there to provide a helping hand for adults who are thinking of returning to studies but who are worried about the costs. You have complete freedom over what you spend the money on, which could be travel costs, childcare or college books. I would urge everyone who's considering going to college in September to check if they are eligible."

According to expert psychologist Dr Gary Wood adults make great learners. He said: "It's true that mature students make good learners and are more likely to stick with their course. They are more focused and committed as usually they have gone back to college to study something they've always wanted to do and have taken time to make the decision. If you've found yourself to be an 'empty nester' it's the perfect opportunity to engage in learning and activities that are stimulating for the mind."

If you are thinking about going back to college in September, now is the time to start planning ahead. ALG can help with any financial worries you may have.

Since the national roll out in September 2007 over 16,000 learners across the country have received ALG.

Call 0800 100 900 or visit [www.direct.gov.uk/alg](http://www.direct.gov.uk/alg) to see if you are eligible.

Top tips from Dr Gary Wood to help you though the empty nest syndrome:

- Go back to college and study something that interested you first time around, but perhaps you weren't ready to study back then. There are

vocational courses such as childcare and law, as well as more traditional courses such as maths and English.

- Accept support from your family and friends. Just because your house is empty does not mean that you are alone
- Have a big clear out and eliminate some of the clutter, your house can be anything you want it to be now. Carefully place your child's keepsakes in safe storage
- Build new friendships. Going to college can be a great opportunity to meet new people

**Notes to editors:**

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ALG is available to adults on low incomes 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.

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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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