

## **North West adults want to go back to school**

*63% think a new qualification could get them the job they really want*

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Research commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) reveals that almost two thirds (63%) of adults in the North West want to go back to school with the ambition that going back to learning will get them the job that they really want. However, two thirds say money worries are holding them back.

Today marks the launch of Adult Learners' Week 2008, an annual week-long national campaign, celebrated in over 40 countries, to inspire people to pursue adult learning.

With the majority of Britain's adults saying they would seriously consider returning to education if they received financial support, the LSC is celebrating the Adult Learning Grant (ALG) this week, a grant designed as a helping hand for adults thinking about learning but worried about the financial barriers that may stand in their way. ALG provides eligible low income adult learners with up to £30 a week to help with the extra costs of learning.

Since the grant became available over 43,000 people have received ALG, exceeding expectations and making it hugely successful. ALG has supported 3641 people going back to learning in the North West. However, there are still thousands of adults who could be taking advantage of ALG to either catch up on skills not learnt at school or to learn for work.

Lack of self-confidence, fear of failure and a lack of relevant skills are also cited as obstacles standing in the way of people and the lives they really want to be living. This echoes research carried out at the beginning of 2008 where respondents said that the top things that would stop them fulfilling their dreams this year was lack of money and fear. The LSC is proving that personal development needn't be a financial strain, highlighting that many people could be eligible for financial support whilst studying and demonstrating the long term financial benefits of going back to learning. Learning a new skill, or enhancing those you already have, in fact, increases your worth and could even result in a significant increase in annual salary.

Financial expert Sue Hayward, comments: "It's very sad that so many of us recognise the importance of continuing to learn, even as adults, but feel so restricted by money. Improving your skills is a proven way to increase employability and in turn increase earnings. Adult Learners' Week is the perfect opportunity for everyone to think seriously about the benefits of going back to learning and explore the financial grants available to them."

As we find ourselves in the midst of a credit crunch, adults have even more reason to learn a new skill and secure their future. Investing in a vocational skill or qualification can help safeguard against the current credit crunch and with skills shortages continuing to have a negative impact on UK productivity and competitiveness, also increase employability.

Janet Jackson, Partnership Director for the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in the North West, says: "Financial pressures can often prevent people gaining the qualifications they need for work. ALG is designed to open up opportunities for low skilled, low income adults to gain new skills and qualifications and in turn, improve

their employment prospects. We know ALG can make a real difference, with some colleges reporting one hundred per cent of learners who receive ALG going on to complete their courses.”

If you are thinking about going back to college this year 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 100 900 today.

**Notes to editors:**

**Janet Jackson from the LSC will be available for media interviews on the afternoon of Monday May 19. For more information contact Barbara Phillips at COI News & PR on 0161 952 4504.**

ALG is available to 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.

**ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE LSC BY COI NEWS & PR.**

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