

## **ADULT LEARNING GRANT HELPS THRILL-SEEKER FIND DREAM CAREER AFTER ROUND THE WORLD ADVENTURE**

**(with photographs)**

An intrepid thrill-seeker who ditched her nine to five office job to 'find herself' on a round the world adventure is now on track for a dream career in counselling, with help from an Adult Learning Grant (ALG).

Kim Mitchell and her husband Richard sold their Lancaster home to fund a once-in-a-lifetime trip across the globe, which saw them take in the exotic sights of South America, New Zealand, Australia, Thailand, Cambodia and India.

Her year out made Kim realise she was destined for a career counselling young adults. In September, the 26-year-old is due to start a counselling degree at The University of Cumbria – after completing her Access Course at Lancaster and Morecambe College with financial support from ALG.

As the Adult Learning Grant today celebrates its one year anniversary since national roll-out in 2007, figures show that the scheme has soared to success over the past 12 months, providing financial support to a 3,820 adult learners in the North West since the scheme began<sup>1</sup>. ALG pays up to £30 per week for full time learners aged 19 and over who are studying for their first level 2 or 3 qualification (equivalent to five good GCSEs or two good A Levels).

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

Kim said: “My old job was quite bureaucratic and I was ready for a change. Getting the ALG took some of the pressure off me financially and I would definitely encourage other adults thinking of returning to college to apply for the grant.”

Kim, who lives in Lancaster, added: “Travelling has always been a passion of mine, and it just felt right to take some time out and think about my future. I’ve always been interested in counselling, and strongly believe it can be a good alternative to taking anti depressants. I would love to get into the field of person centred therapy to work with young adults, and also families.

“Getting some extra cash from the ALG helped to pay for stationary, text books and also my travel costs to and from college. My old job was well paid but sitting at a desk all day wasn’t really for me and I felt I’d taken it as far as I could. I’m very excited about going to university and what the future will hold.”

Janet Jackson, Partnership Director for the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in the North West, said: “Kim’s story shows the difference an Adult Learning Grant can make to a learner’s studies. The grant is a chance for people across the region to learn new skills and improve their chance of getting the job that’s right for them. A lot of people want to continue their education but worry about how they will make ends meet. Up to £30 a week can really make the difference when it comes to buying course materials or even putting it towards travel expenses. To find out if you’re eligible for the grant visit the [www.direct.gov.uk/alg](http://www.direct.gov.uk/alg) or call 0800 100 900.”

Developed as part of a new Government initiative to improve the levels of both vocational and academic skills in the UK, ALG is intended to be a helping hand for adults who want to learn more skills, but have certain financial worries.

Sheila Henderson, Programme Area Manager for Access courses at Lancaster and Morecambe College said: “The Access course is an excellent route back into education for anyone who has not achieved the traditional A level qualifications but has always wanted to progress onto Higher Education. It’s a valuable 'stepping stone' which transforms and motivates students to achieve the goals to which they have always aspired.

“The ALG is very useful for the students who may need extra support to cover travel expenses, child care or money for text books. It can often be a valuable addition to their income at a time when they want to concentrate on their studies.”

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**

1. Janet Jackson from the Learning and Skills Council is available for media interviews during the morning of June 25. For more information and for photographs of Kim Mitchell contact Anne Arnold at COI News & PR on 0161 952 4505 or [anne.arnold@coi.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:anne.arnold@coi.gsi.gov.uk)

**\* 1,219 students in Lancashire received ALG in 2007/08 at the following colleges:**

Accrington and Rossendale College  
The Adult College  
Blackburn College  
Blackpool and the Fylde College  
Blackpool Sixth Form College  
Burnley College  
Cardinal Newman College  
Lancaster and Morecambe College

Myerscough College  
Nelson and Colne College  
Preston College  
Runshaw College  
Skelmersdale and Ormskirk Colleges  
St Mary's College, Blackburn

2. The Adult Learning Grant (ALG), a new service 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) for 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.
  
3. The Adult Learning Grant is important because skills shortages continue to have a negative impact on UK productivity and competitiveness in the face of fast-growing economies. ALG aims to encourage individuals return to education by offering a helping hand to contribute to things like books, travel and learning materials while they study.
  
4. For more information, go to [www.direct.gov.uk/alg](http://www.direct.gov.uk/alg)
  
5. The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive 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.

**ISSUED ON BEHALF OF LSC BY COI NEWS AND PR. FOR FURTHER  
INFORMATION CONTACT ANNE ARNOLD: 0161 952 4505**