



Adult Learners' Week 2014

June 14 to 20

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FE Week

LEARNING THAT GOES FAR BEYOND THE SCHOOL CLASSROOM

Skills strategy isn't 'fit for the future', says Niace

FE Week is the only newspaper dedicated to further education and skills

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Welcome to this year's Adult Learners' Week (ALW) supplement.

For me, the best thing about this annual week of celebration is the stories of people who find new skills that change their lives.

What has struck me this year is that it's not just people who struggle at school who benefit from adult learning (although, of course, they do), it also boosts those who want to progress at work or pursue a

lifelong dream or are in prison and want the skills to change their lives when they are released.

The National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (Niace) wants everyone to experience these benefits; on page 3, read the manifesto that it believes will help to make this happen.

On pages 4 and 5, learners, including winners of the ALW awards, tell their stories. Read too about the Transforming Lives award for tutors.

On pages 6 and 7, there's a profile of Bob Rose, South Gloucestershire and Stroud College's head of work and life preparation. He's a man who has experienced the power of adult learning in his own life.

We've got a feature on prison learning on pages 10 and 11, with a piece by Prisoners' Education Trust chief executive Rod Clark that celebrates offender learners' achievements.

On page 12, Association of Colleges president Michele Sutton tells us what colleges can do for adult learners, and Dr Fiona Aldridge, Niace assistant director for development and research, analyses the institute's adult learning participation survey.

On page 13, Frances Graham, director of

Workbase Training, writes about Learning Associates who support learning in non-unionised workplaces, while Association of Employment and Learning Providers chief executive Stewart Segal calls for integrated employment and skills programmes.

Finally you can look at pages 14 and 15 for our calendar of taster sessions running across the UK throughout this wonderful week.

As always, you can contact us and keep track of events on twitter via @FEWeek #ALW14



The National Institute of Continuing Adult Education (Niace) has called for a review of the skills system and the creation of a new government department connecting different areas of learning.

In its manifesto, launched Friday, June 13, Niace said the review should examine the long-term skills needs and funding issues that face the UK over the next 20 years, reporting back by 2018.

The 24-page manifesto sets out Niace's plans for a "lifelong learning society" through six priorities for a government elected in 2015, including an emphasis on informal learning, funding routed to the learner via a personal skills account, fully-funded basic skills for adults and an apprentice charter.

Niace chief executive David Hughes told *FE Week*: "The current learning and skills system we have isn't fit for the next 15 or 20 years. We need a radical new skills strategy. "We need more people working, more people productive, more people staying in work longer — in the next decade there will be 13m job vacancies but only 7m entering the jobs market."

This new strategy, he said, was important because of the ageing population and the rising age of retirement. People could expect to spend more than half a century in work, and would need to reskill and retrain to keep up with shifting employer demand.

"Yet nearly all of the funding is focused on those up to the age of 21 or 24, and on big qualifications designed to help them enter the labour market — there's no supply or sensible way of funding reskilling mid-career," he said.

"So we're trying to find a new way to look at the whole life course and ... what the balance needs to be for different people at different stages of their lives."

Mr Hughes compared the proposed review to the 2011 Dilnot Review of adult social care and the 2013 Government review of state pensions.

"These things are linked to adult education, because if you have the skills, you stay active and in work longer and your care needs are lower," he said.

Also included in the manifesto is the idea of creating a new government department to bring together education, skills and work programmes from the Department for Work and Pensions, and working closely with local enterprise partnerships and local authorities.

Mr Hughes said: "We're calling for a new localism — the new Government would set the framework nationally, but would work

closely with Leps and local authorities which can take that sophisticated local approach to an economic growth strategy which has skills embedded in it."

The manifesto also calls for a personal skills account, where individuals, employers and the state would contribute funding, allowing the learner to dictate how it was spent, accompanied by 'career reviews' — careers guidance at key transitions, such as returning to work after redundancy or caring for children or others.

Mr Hughes said: "This would centre the power with the individual to decide what learning they do, how they do it, and where they purchase it from."

Ultimately, he said, the skills system needed to recognise the importance of non-formal learning — education that did not lead to a public qualification — that could have an impact for those with few qualifications who wanted to return to learning and often used by those in work who wanted to upskill.

"We're obsessed with getting people through qualifications because it's the way we fund — we fund qualifications rather than learning, so providers will find it risky to work with those with basic skills needs because their ability to move directly towards a qualification is problematic," he said.

"But their need to learn is immense... so it might be that you do some informal stuff, you then do a college certificate and it then might be you're ready to do a GCSE or more formal qualification."

He said the world of adult learning was at a "key moment".

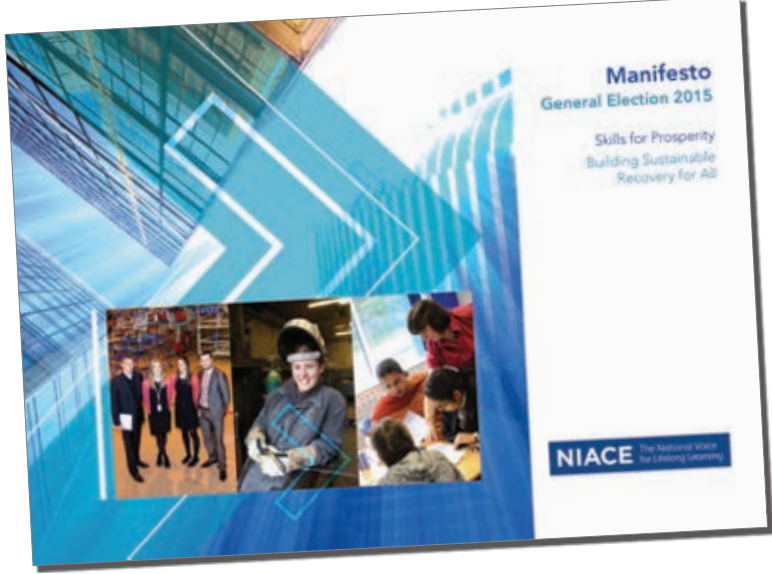
"I hover between doom and gloom based on all of the evidence of funding cuts and reductions in numbers, and immense hope and optimism when you look at the brilliant things happening," he said.

And, of course, the best time to celebrate and draw attention to those brilliant things was adult learners' week.

"Despite all of the cuts here, there and everywhere, we still get some amazing stories nominated for awards about submissions for awards — this year we had record numbers with almost 1,400 nominations," he said.

"We've got some superb stories — it's quite a balance this year between the personal epic, heroic challenges that people have overcome, training providers and tutors doing creative, innovative, inspirational work, and employers taking their responsibilities seriously to support people to maximise their own talent."

The Niace manifesto will be presented at a policy conference on Thursday, June 19, where representatives from each of the three main political parties will give their response.



The Niace manifesto aims to create a "lifelong learning" society — but at the moment only around two-fifths (38 per cent) of those surveyed said they had done any form of learning in the past three years.

Niace's participation survey tracks not just how many adults are engaged in some form of learning, but also how many plan to be in the future.

The data reveals that those who have experienced learning in the last three years, or are current learners, are much more likely to say they would consider more learning in the future, while the majority of those who have done none since leaving school say they would not.

Dr Fiona Aldridge, Niace assistant director for development and research, said: "We know people who have the opportunity to be successful learners become serial learners for life."

"In contrast, many others are left believing that learning and its benefits are simply not for them."

For Niace chief executive David Hughes, this

is where non-formal learning is important.

"There's an irony that if you go into the HR department of any major business what they'll talk about in terms of workforce development, particularly for senior staff will mostly be informal/non-formal, very little of it will be about public qualifications," he said.

"So they recognise non-formal learning but what I think they don't fully recognise is how powerful that can be for people at lower level skills as well."

"It almost to becomes the privilege of the learned to be able to learn informally and that just seems wrong."

Often, he said, people who have had no recent experience of learning, particularly if they struggle with basic literacy and numeracy, will feel daunted by the idea of taking a formal qualification.

But, given some confidence they may well be about progress, said Mr Hughes.

"If you start with some informal learning, they get that confidence and they start to feel that perhaps learning might be something they can do," he said.

Advertorial

GRAHAM-HASTING-EVANS

MANAGING DIRECTOR, NOCN

Occupational-led skills to support the economy

Recently the Edge Foundation published a report on the importance of vocational education and qualifications. The Association for Employment and Learning Providers has made its views clear and on 13 June the National Institute for Continuing Adult Education published its 'Manifesto General Election 2015' on adult skills.

Looking at all the commentary, there is a lot of common ground.

A large proportion of occupations that are expected to power the economy from 2015 will not necessarily require a traditional academic pathway, with the majority of jobs being created needing a vocational or occupational-based set of knowledge and competencies. An increasing concern amongst employers is that a growing 'skills gap', fuelled by the age profile of the existing workforce, will have a significant impact.

Demand from employers for skilled personnel is expected to increase in a large number of areas including health and social care, construction, engineering, technology

and energy, including renewables and conservation.

However, it is predicted there will still be significant numbers of adults who do not have the skills to match the employers requirements. And as employers' requirements are not fixed, the demands of the occupation now could be fundamentally different in 10 or 20 years' time. Anyone who has worked in industry knows that upskilling is a constant and critical necessity, but very little is ever mentioned of this in terms of public policy. As well as the skill to do today's job, people must be given the opportunity to acquire and develop new and updated competencies, driving a need for modular training and accreditation.

Globalisation is also an economic factor we cannot ignore. People need skills that are recognised not only in their local area, but across their industry sector and the world. As people acquire skills they need to be able to demonstrate, through recognised, robust and rigorous qualifications, to any employer,

in any country, that they can 'do the job'.

In this environment, if we wish to avoid a large and growing number of people who cannot find employment due to skills deficiencies, we must recognise that adult skills development and education is as important as formal education up to the age of 18 or 19 years.

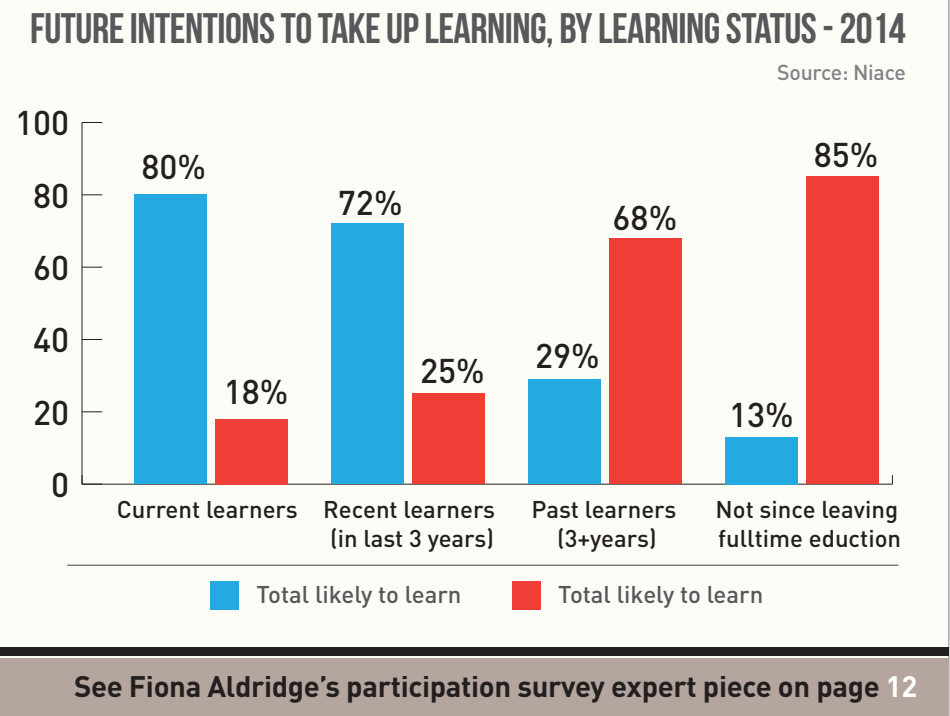
There are a number of key areas the UK needs to make further progress on:

- Delivering people with the skills employers and the economy needs
- Employer-led vocational and occupation-based courses and training
- Better and clearer careers information for parents, young people and schools/colleges on the benefits of a vocational path to employment, particularly in science, engineering and technology
- Giving our young people vocational pathways towards occupations within sectors and give them the basic and foundation skills that employers need
- Parity of esteem for the value of vocational pathways and apprenticeships, demonstrating that they are equivalent in status to an academic route
- Pathways that will allow people, particularly those already in the workforce, to progress through a vocational route to roles historically seen as the domain of university graduates or post-graduates – opening up equality of access to all
- Clear and understandable

apprenticeships across all jobs where this form of skills and knowledge development provides the 'rite of passage' to an occupation. We must urgently expand the Trailblazers process

- A flexible funding requiem which recognises that the learner, the employer and the Government each need to play a part. As part of this, Government needs to understand that its role is to support every person to attain the basic employability skills that they need and provide the investment into areas of strategic skills shortages
- Strong local co-ordination of skills development for the key industries in the area, bringing together employers and the Local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) within a single clear Government national integrated vocational education, skills development and industrial strategy; and
- Robust qualifications that are meaningful to the learner and the employer; within a framework which permits the accreditation of 'sensible building blocks' of training towards larger qualifications

We must also get to a point at which we have a stable and robust vocational education and skills system that does not keep changing radically with each electoral cycle. Employers, trade associations, LEPs, schools, colleges, training providers and awarding organisations all have a key role in achieving success.



Celebrating adult learners success



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The achievements of adult learners and the employers, providers and tutors who made it possible were celebrated with an award ceremony on Monday, June 16.

It's been a record breaking year for the Adult Learners' Week (ALW) Awards, with 1,400 nominations received by organisers the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (Niace) showing how adult education can give people the bug for learning, whether it's in college, in the work place, in prison or with their families.

Behind every award nomination there is a story of someone changing their lives for the better, or helping someone else to make that change.

More than 90 awards have been given out at local and national

level, to young adults and older learners, to apprentices and degree graduates and to employers and providers.

From 22-year-old Kimberly Chastney, East of England Young Adult Learner Award winner, who put previous educational struggles behind her and battled illness to complete a social sciences access course while working for a mental health charity, to Seraj Miah, Yorkshire and Humber Learning for Work Award winner, who at the age of 33 decided to pursue his dream of becoming a civil engineer, this year has seen some amazing achievements.

Unfortunately there were far too many winners to fit on this page, so here is just a small selection of this year's ALW national award winners.

The awards ceremony was due to be held in Northumberland Avenue, just off London's Trafalgar Square.

Sarah Vernon



Sarah Vernon at Bassetlaw District General Hospital

LEARNING FOR WORK NATIONAL APPRENTICE AWARD

After 16 years in retail, Learning for Work National Apprentice award winner Sarah Vernon decided she needed a change of career.

She got a job in Bassetlaw District General Hospital as an assistant to the cardiographer at Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospitals Foundation Trust and three years ago was promoted to senior cardiography assistant.

She then jumped at a chance to work towards an apprenticeship in health care and now, at 48, has just been promoted to senior cardiographer.

"I was totally shocked to win the adult learners' award — it is such an honour," she said.

"I was just doing my best to get a recognised qualification for a job which I enjoy, and have ended up getting an award for it.

"I would like to thank Marie Pitchford, my tutor, and Kath Thorpe who nominated me, for all their help and support over the past year."



Port of Tilbury logistics academy tutor Steve Newman with former student, now port employee, Ahmed Kassam

Port of Tilbury

LEARNING FOR WORK NATIONAL PROJECT AWARD

The Learning for Work National Project award was won by the Thurrock Skills project, which gives local people the opportunity to develop the skills to work at the Port of Tilbury on the River Thames.

The pre-employment training programme helped learners work towards a certificate in warehousing, English, maths and employability skills.

"It's been very well received by learners and a lot of them have been long term unemployed coming from varying different backgrounds," said Jo Sears, head of skills development at Ixion Holdings which developed the scheme,

along with Thurrock Council and Grays Thurrock Job Centre.

"They get training according to the real world of the employer, and obviously we've had quite high success rates."

More than 110 learners have passed through the project since it was started 18 months ago, with more than 70 per cent finding a job through the port's main employment agency.

We've got some superb stories ... the personal epic, heroic challenges people have overcome

David Hughes, Niace chief executive

Nicholas Higson



Award-winner Nicholas Higson with comedian Russell Brand

LEARNING FOR WORK NATIONAL INDIVIDUAL AWARD

Since the age of 14, Nicholas Higson winner of the learning for work national individual award, has battled alcohol addiction.

But admitting himself to rehab in 2011 changed his life in more ways than one. While at Burton Addiction Centre in Burton-on-Trent, he volunteered as a commis chef at Langan's Tea Rooms, a café helping recovering addicts to return to work, and was offered a full-time job and the chance to study a professional catering qualification with Burton and South Derbyshire College.

Now 49, Nick has catered for the Conservative Party conference, the House of Commons, the Recovery Festival (an event focused on helping with addiction), Russell Brand and Iain Duncan Smith.

Nick said: "It's been a mad journey but fantastic — from a point where it really was 'do or die' and going to the addiction centre to where I am now.

"I've never won anything before and to get recognition on this scale is the most special thing that's happened in my life."

The staff who transform lives

Everyone remembers their best teacher. Adult learners remember their best tutor too - and now they're getting the recognition that they deserve.

Most people can remember a teacher who made all the difference to their education, but for adults coming back into learning, this role can be even more important.

For every adult learner who succeeds, whether or not they win an award, there is a tutor or lecturer who helped them towards that success — often teaching them not just the specialist subject but skills for learning too.

These tutors will be recognised at the Transforming Lives special awards ceremony on Thursday, June 19, the second year the event has been held.

Andrew Thompson, a catering and hospitality assessor at Burton and South Derbyshire College, whose former student Nicholas Higson is one of this year's Adult Learners' Week award winners, says it's about time tutors were acknowledged.

"I don't think they get the recognition they deserve," he says.

"People look at tutors and lecturers as staff who work Monday to Friday, maybe 9 until 4.30 — but what they don't see is the evenings and weekends they put in for planning, marking or perhaps working out how they can help particular learners."

Adult learning can present its own challenges, which, according to Andrew, are often down to the individual and their previous experiences of learning.

"But it can be enormously rewarding," he said.

"Tutors do get a lot out of seeing the learners progress on their qualifications — and they do get a lot of appreciation. "I think it's a great idea that they are being recognised for their achievements in what they do for adult learners. They work tirelessly."

The Transforming Lives awards ceremony is due to start at 2.30pm at One Great George Street, near Parliament Square in central London.



Tutor Andrew Thompson with his award-winning former student Nicholas Higson

PROFILE

Passing the adult learner's education drive test

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Like many learners who have returned to education as an adult, Bob Rose doesn't think his story is anything special.

"Am I boring you?" he asks me repeatedly, followed by: "Are you sure people will want to read this?"

But his journey from teenage rebel who couldn't read or write well into his twenties to head of work and life preparation at South Gloucester and Stroud College via the motorsport world championships, is far from dull.

Now aged 44, Rose says his youth is "a chapter of my life I am far from proud of".

At 13, Bob Rose was 6ft 3in with ginger hair and, he tells me, "stuck out like a sore thumb".

There was one incident he remembers during his childhood in Bermondsey, South London, which sparked off his problems with the education system.

"I was about 13 — you know at school and everyone gathers round and says, 'Fight, fight, fight!' when there's a little scuffle?" he says.

"And one of these fights, someone had kicked a muddy football up into the crowd and it had come down and landed clean on this guy's head.

"Me, I thought it was the most entertaining thing I had seen in a long time, couldn't stop laughing, and he gave me a bloody good hiding — so the original fight stopped while he beat me up.

"After that I gritted my teeth and I wouldn't accept anyone hitting me anymore, and then unfortunately when you have that reputation, it precedes you and goes with you — and the teachers knew it, though I probably gave the teachers as hard a time as they gave me."

His relationship with his teachers wasn't helped by the fact that his attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia and mild autism weren't diagnosed until he was 29.

"I'm not saying the diagnosis would have helped my education, but rather than sitting me in a corner wearing a dunce's hat, they might have maybe encouraged me, but there was nothing," says Rose.

"I hated education — I never would have thought I would work in education."

The experience left him "thinking the world was against me", he says and led to some "tearaway" behaviour in

his teenage years, which he isn't keen to talk about.

"I generally went off the wall really," concedes Rose.

"It caused my mum, Jean, a whole heap of grief, and she stood by me but I alienated myself just by generally being a complete donut — that's a polite way of putting it — and... once you are in that rut you can't get out."

After school, Bob took advantage of his size and found work as a nightclub doorman, but finding that he was "good with his hands" he found work helping out in a garage during the week as well.

Eventually, after 15 years as a doorman, Rose moved down to Burnham-on-Sea in Somerset, to work in a garage and develop his career in motorsport, rallying and competing as a co-driver.

"Whatever I do I have to do to the best of my ability, so I got very competitive," he says.

"I was British F2 Champion in 1997, 1998, European F2 Champion in 1999, Lithuanian Champion in 2000 and 2001.

"I knew I could build a good car, so I went into preparing cars."

Rose helped build cars that won championships in the UK and the Middle East and he accompanied them to competitions across the globe.

"It was a brilliant time, really exciting time, met some good people — knew Colin McRae well enough to go for a pint with... well, a lot of pints," he says,

When his garage began to take on apprentices from the nearby Bridgwater College, Rose encountered some of the frustrations that many employers complain of.

"Academically they knew what they were doing, but with work ethic, practicality, they didn't," says Rose.

"So I then became annoying to Bridgwater College because they were supplying me with apprentices that I didn't think were up to it.

"So I took two apprentices from scratch and taught them practical, then academic, and it worked — I couldn't believe it."

So he sold his motorsport company and divided his time between rallying consultancy in the Middle East and practical lecturing at Bridgwater College.

Rose's curriculum manager, Jason Kilduff, saw Rose's desire to progress in spite of his lack of qualifications, and persuaded then-Principal Fiona McMillan to allow Rose to sit his numeracy and literacy entry and level



I hated education — I never would have thought I would work in education

"I took two apprentices from scratch and taught them practical, then academic, and it worked — I couldn't believe it"

one qualifications.

"The skills for life staff at Bridgwater College, I drove them up the wall," he says.

"I couldn't sit still, it was just shocking — I used to go home in tears because I was so frustrated with myself.

"I needed extra tuition, so

Bridgwater College used to run a summer school and an Easter school for maths and English, and I used to sit with students who were 14 or 15."

But, despite his struggles, Rose managed to collect a string of qualifications, including a higher national certificate in teaching and a PGCE in around five years at college.

"I got a bug for it," he says.

"In my life, I have to impress with everything that I do — I was outstanding with my hands ... and I just had a thirst for success."

He began to work with the youth offending team, and still seems amazed by the qualifications he continued to pile up.

"I can't believe it," he says.

"I got a post-graduate certificate in restorative justice and an open university degree in educational inclusion, so I've got an open degree... this is me, you know."

In 2008 Rose moved to Weston College as manager of foundation learning, working with learners with learning and behavioural issues.

However, Rose's dedication to his education and others' had taken a toll on his personal life.

"I just went flat out," he says.

"That was the demise of my marriage, to be honest — because

It's a personal thing

What's your favourite book?

The Real McCrae — Colin McCrae's autobiography. He was a rally driver and was just brilliant, just amazing, really nice fella, and one of my all-time heroes

If you could invite anyone, living or dead, to a dinner party, who would it be?

Margaret Thatcher, Robbie Williams, Rhod Gilbert, Nelson Mandela and Prince Charles

What is your pet hate?

Academic snobbery, because I've had to work my way up from nothing to what I am now, and people can sometimes be snobbish if you haven't got a degree or an academic education

What do you do to switch off from work?

Laugh my heart out. And I go out with my dogs, really. So just spending time with my partner Helen and my dogs — the country life I suppose, whenever I have got time I take the dogs out. I've got a cocker spaniel, Alfie, and a labrador, Rosie

What did you want to be when you were growing up?

A train driver



Bob Rose on an excursion while rallying in Kenya in 1996



Bob with his first car, a mark one Ford Escort in, 1986



A 14-year-old Bob on holiday in Corfu in 1984 with his dad, George, and mum, Jean



Bob rally driving in the late 1990s

every single minute of the day I was upstairs, doing qualifications."

Although he was "devastated" to leave Weston, Rose headed for Wiltshire College just a year later, looking for a change of scenery.

But he kept in touch with Helen Patterson, Weston College's curriculum co-ordinator, and while he was in Wiltshire their relationship "blossomed".

Rose now lives with Helen and her two daughters Chloe and Amy near

Weston-super-Mare, after taking up the post in at South Gloucestershire and Stroud College in 2012.

"The vice-principal Sarah-Jane [Watkins] said to me 'Bob, I'm going got let you out of the cage — I want you to fly'," he says.

The encouragement spurred him on to oversee huge development of the preparation for work and life department, and he repeatedly emphasises his gratitude to those who have given him a chance.

"Jason Kilduff, Dr Paul [Phillips, Weston's principal], Sarah-Jane, and Pete Little [who Rose met at Weston College], and obviously Helen, who puts up with my rubbish, they're the best, they're just amazing," he says.

"And my mum —she's stuck by me through thick and thin."

Rose adds: "I wanted to change the world and I can only change a bit... but the position I am in, as is any senior manager in a college, is a privileged position to change lives."

ADAPTING TO A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

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We don't have the luxury of 360 degree vision like our lizard friend here, but we do know that there are big changes coming in the world of vocational skills and qualifications. And that we need to be ready to adapt to this changing environment.

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Offender education — the inside story

Learning programmes in prison cut reoffending rates dramatically. It costs £34,000 a-year to keep someone in jail, so offender learning is more than a worthwhile investment, as Rebecca Cooney reports.

Around 85,000 people are in prison in the UK and almost half of them will reoffend, statistics would suggest.

But for those who actively participate in learning programmes, the reoffending rate can dramatically dip below the 47 per cent national average.

In 2012/13 the offender learning programme budget was £146m — but what does our prisoner education system look like from the inside?

Toni Fazaeli, commissioner for the all-party Parliamentary skills group, remembers teaching in prisons in the 1980s.

“You would go into a portable classroom in the middle of the atrium where there would be barely enough room to have seats around the table,” she said.

“Five or six prisoners would come in, but it would be a different five or six every week because prison officers would go into the recreational space and say ‘you, you and you — education’.

“That was the group that I had to work with, and, depending on the prison officer, ‘education’ was either a reward, a punishment or a random circumstance.”

Worryingly, she said she hadn’t seen a huge change in some of these attitudes.

“Those logistical issues about education are so vital — why are we not seeing a difference between the early 80s and 2014?” she says.

Former prisoner Chris Syrus agreed.

He realised that he needed to turn his life around at 25 and at the start of a five-year sentence for drug offences. He did a distance learning degree in psychology with the Prisoners’ Education Trust and, after his release in 2009, began a social enterprise working with young people.

He believes that education in prison should have incentives. “There’s a target and reward system — a lot of people behave so they can get to a better prison, or a nicer wing where they give you television or privileges. Education plays no part in that,” he said.

“If you educate yourself or you pass a grade, that’s good for you, that’s what matters ... there should be a more immediate reward system for that.

“It should be a part of rehabilitation as much as the specialised rehabilitation courses like victim awareness — there needs to be more incentive around it. At the moment, there’s nothing.”

However, there have been some improvements in recent years, with projects like the Bad Boys’ Bakery — winner of a national award at this year’s Adult Learners’ Week — helping offenders to enjoy learning and preparing them for life outside.

Bad Boys’ Bakery gives offenders at HMP Brixton the chance to gain skills, work experience and qualifications by producing baked goods that are then sold to local cafes.

Following its first year, almost a quarter of participants who were subsequently released have found employment, with a reoffending rate of just 5 per cent.

Shane Chowen, policy officer for the Institute for Learning, said: “One of the reasons Bad Boys’ Bakery works is that you



An offender learner studying in his cell

know if you turn up to your lessons, you’re going to get the skills and you’re going to transfer into a job when you leave.

“Also, your identity there becomes a student, a person, rather than a prisoner — there’s a more positive learning attitude for the individual, and for the institution.”

Mr Syrus agreed, saying that for him education transformed a prison experience that sometimes meant spending 23 hours a day in his cell.

“Just having something to do and occupy yourself was one thing,” he said.

“But it also built up my self-esteem because every month I was sending off an assignment, I’m passing, I’m achieving my degree and I’m transforming from a prisoner to a student.”

However, according to Mr Chowen, prisoners are rarely seen as students.

“A lot of good practice isn’t replicated across one prison, let alone across different

prisons,” he said.

“When it’s done well, it’s done really well but they’re not doing enough to share best practice.”

And this is where providers can come in — particularly with ensuring that teaching is not isolated from the real world of work.

“Providers running prison education need to be held to account more in terms of making sure they transfer the employer engagement that they do for their



Chris Syrus promoting the book of poetry he wrote about his experiences in prison

mainstream provision into their offender learning provision — that should be high up on the list of things they need to demonstrate that they can do in the future,” said Mr Chowen.

Colleges also need to be more flexible. If courses only start in September, offenders released in February could find themselves without a job or training and in danger of falling back to crime.

“The wider education landscape just isn’t

as responsive and as flexible as it needs to be,” said Mr Chowen.

However, Ms Fazaeli says prisons need to address issues too — there needs to be a “rebalancing” with education and security. “It has been security first and then education where we can around the edges,” she said.

Mr Chowen says apart from the potential impact on someone’s life, self-esteem and opportunities, there is also an important

economic argument for prison education.

“When you’re running a prison, learning and skills is a cost, and that needs to be seen more as an investment because cutting reoffending rates does reap benefits economically further down the line,” he said.

“If we’re going to spend £34,000 a-year keeping someone in prison, shouldn’t we be making sure we get something back from that?”



The Bad Boys Bakery project teaches catering skills and gives work experience to prisoners at HMP Brixton and graduate Christian, who does not wish to give his full name, has found employment in the catering industry since his release. Inset: Some of the Bad Boys Bakery’s work



ROD CLARK
 CHIEF EXECUTIVE, PRISONERS
 EDUCATION TRUST (PET)

Celebrating the efforts and successes of learners behind bars

There are many success to be celebrated during Adult Learners’ Week (ALW), and none will be more impressive than those of learners hoping that education can help lead them away from a life of crime.

Celebrating success is quite rightly embedded in the culture of the education sector.

Of the many events to congratulate learners for their achievements, we particularly applaud the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (Niace) ALW (June 14 to 20) because it proactively seeks nominations for prisoners and ex-prisoners.

Many prisoners tell me that they are always being told what is wrong with them and they rarely hear praise, so to work hard in the tough setting of a prison and then to

be awarded for it is incredibly powerful for them.

This year, for our 25th anniversary, we are particularly proud that the achievements of two of the people we nominated are being recognised. One of our alumni, Junior Smart, has won an adult Learners’ award for continuing with his studies and using them to help improve London’s communities after being released.

In the same week, a prisoner who we nominated is attending a special Open University Graduation ceremony in his honour at HMP Belmarsh.

They are among the 2,000 people we fund each year to study distance learning courses including GCSEs, A-levels and degrees that aren’t otherwise available in prisons.

Recent research from the government found that our learners were a quarter less

likely to reoffend after being released from prison than an equivalent peer group. This is hugely significant when we consider that crime committed by repeat offenders costs up to £13bn per year.

Our learners will be telling their success stories throughout ALW on National Prison Radio to inspire others to consider studying something they are passionate about.

Studying in prison has never been easy but recent changes mean that it is much harder today.

Staff shortages due to cutbacks and changes to regimes have been causing problems for some time. Headline-grabbing developments such as restrictions on access to books and tighter controls of the day release schemes are recent examples. Clearly students need books to help them study, especially as access to the internet is prohibited in prisons.

Studying in prison has never been easy but recent changes mean that it is much harder today

Many students also study in community college under the release on temporary license (ROTL) scheme. Of course, security risks must be managed but despite the recent widespread media coverage of prisoner escapes the statistics show

absconding has fallen steadily over the past decade (from 1,301 in 2003-04 to just 204 in 2012-13).

It is important that worries over security are not taken so far that they undermine the safety of our communities.

It makes no sense to release prisoners poorly-equipped with the education to help them live a life free of crime.

After studying an Open University degree funded by PET, 34-year-old Chris Syrus had ambitions to work with young people and completed an advice and guidance level three and PTLL’s Teacher Training on ROTL.

He told me that having more freedom at the end of his sentence to adjust to life on the outside gave him the time to get a job and save money so he could prepare himself to leave prison.

The time given to resettle back into the

community also helped him stay close to his family, who had always supported him during his sentence. He was given permission to attend an event where he was then awarded a ‘Learning and Skills Council achievement award’.

For the first time in years he went out in the evening with family members, who told him how proud they were to see him receive the accolade.

He is now running his own successful business, Syrus Consultancy, helping other young people referred from the Jobcentre Plus and Youth Offending Teams, to gain skills and employment to steer clear of crime.

At PET, we earnestly hope that prison regimes are operated constructively so that we can look forward to celebrating many more success stories like those of Junior and Chris in the future.

EXPERTS



MICHELE SUTTON
ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES PRESIDENT AND
BRADFORD COLLEGE GROUP CHIEF EXECUTIVE

From teenagers to 90-year-olds (and older) — colleges play their part the world of adult learning

A 90-year-old student is just one of the many adult learners enjoying their time at Bradford College, explains Michele Sutton.

Adults get back into education for all kinds of reasons; a change in career, getting back into work after a period of unemployment or for their own interest. Whatever their reason, many find it an intimidating process and colleges must find ways to alleviate that.

They may have had a bad experience of education at school, leading to low self-esteem, or have no knowledge of what's available or where to start.

Take Margaret Green, for example. She's a mature student at Bradford College taking a pharmacy apprenticeship. She was told

by a teacher at school that she was unlikely to amount to anything intellectually. While studying at Bradford, she was named learner of the year for the Yorkshire and Humber region.

Colleges have a vital role to play for people like Margaret in supporting them, giving them a good experience of education and making learning something they enjoy.

Equally, they may have been working for years and decided to retrain, which will require a whole different level of support to settle them into college life.

Instead of waiting for people to come and find them, colleges head out into the community.

Through working with schools and community centres, they get in touch with

people in a relaxed environment and this helps to understand their needs. Bradford College runs short courses at roughly 90 different locations in the community — it's a great way for people to try out different things and learn more about other opportunities available at the college.

Sadly, over the last ten years the number of adults studying has halved, mainly in response to changes in government funding

Many adults returning to education have some support needs — whether that is in numeracy, literacy or study skills — before they can progress to other qualifications.

Colleges provide stepping stones, so students can build up to the next level and the diversity of other students in adult education means people don't feel like the odd-one-out. At Bradford, the oldest student is 90 years old and taking part in an exercise class for elderly people. There is also a man in his 30s who joined an introduction to sewing class, found he has a talent for it and is now on the

improvers' course.

Colleges also have a knack for bringing together diverse groups where friendships can be formed and students learn as much from each other as they do from their teachers.

One attractive feature of college adult education is its flexibility. There are part-time options, which mean their study fits in with the rest of their life — like fork-lift truck driver Gareth who is enrolled on a part-time degree course in ophthalmic dispensing.

Every college will have its stories of enthusiasm, determination and achievement among adult learners. Every college will be exploring ways of reaching, including and helping adult learners who need a second chance.

Teachers, and indeed all staff, are equally committed to helping adults achieve their aims, as they are in supporting the young people at the college.

Sadly, over the last ten years the number of adults studying has halved, mainly in response to changes in government funding. We are now seeing the numbers rising again through referrals from Jobcentre Plus and short programmes of study.

Learning is for life. It is for the economy and the social good. With the benefits of lifelong learning demonstrated by Adult Learners' Week, let's hope for an increase in support for excluded adults who want to take part in education.

and size of the business they work for.

So how do we begin to tackle these persistent inequalities? Perhaps the answer is illustrated here — we know that people who have the opportunity to be successful learners become serial learners for life.

In contrast, many others are left believing that learning and its benefits are simply not for them.

While it will always be important to ensure that young people are supported to gain the skills they need to work and live well for longer, there is an equal need for investment and focus on adults. Eighty per cent of the 2030 workforce are already in the labour market, and the challenges of an ageing population will open up opportunities for more adults to contribute to society, communities and the economy for much longer.

ALW provides us with a great opportunity to showcase the difference that learning can make to individuals, families, communities, employers and the economy as a whole.

In showcasing the powerful stories of award winners who have found success and enjoyment in learning, and by working with providers who are offering opportunities for adults to take part in learning, perhaps for the first time since leaving school, our intention is that many more adults will begin to believe that learning and its benefits might be for them. We hope that policymakers will recognise that prioritising skills for all is something that our country simply cannot afford to neglect.

Participation in learning is still determined by social class

providing clear evidence that developing and using skills improves employment prospects and quality of life as well as boosting growth.

And from an employer perspective, the latest employer skills survey for the UK Commission for Employment and Skills highlighted how a third of employees — potentially 10 million people — do not receive any training at work, while access to opportunities for those who do are heavily influenced by their occupation, and the sector

EXPERTS



FRANCES GRAHAM
DIRECTOR WORKBASE TRAINING

Learning champions of the smaller workplace

The government's Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills report highlights links between productivity and skills, pointing out that 20 per cent of the growth in the output of UK workers can be attributed to growth in their skill level.

It is well-reported how learning champions and peer support play an important role in raising aspirations, and in promoting learning and skills development. In unionised organisations, the role is filled by union learning representatives (ULRs), supported by unionlearn, and in the community by community learning champions (CLCs), supported by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (Niace). Until now, there has been no recognition of this key role in the non-unionised, mostly smaller, workplaces that make up the vast majority of employers in the UK.

To fill that gap, a new voluntary role — the Workplace Learning Advocate (WLA) — has been developed, concept proven and is now winning awards.

The role came about after John Hayes, the then-Skills Minister, in 2011 allocated funding from the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) for WLA development as a national initiative led jointly by Workbase Training and The Johnston Partnership, managed by Niace.

To date, more than 600 WLAs have been trained and now work with more than 450 employers of different sizes and sectors. The WLA offers information and advice about learning to colleagues, promotes free learning opportunities, organises learning events, secures employer support for learning, and builds networks within and beyond their workplace, linking with local learning providers and other resource-holders.

He or she informs, encourages and supports skills development. Collaborative approaches to offering support to employees in unionised and non-unionised workplaces have been a focus of considerable policy interest and ULRs and CLCs have shared resources and expertise. The importance of this new role has been recognised by Niace who are developing programmes for learning for and at work.

WLAs participate in regular local network employer-based meetings, and are supported by lead WLAs with training and support from the Johnston

Partnership and Workbase Training with a range of options including a two-day accredited information and advice course, a two-hour non-accredited online course and resources to including a national

Until now, there has been no recognition of [the role of learning champions] in the non-unionised, mostly smaller, workplaces that make up the vast majority of employers

website (workplacelearningadvocates.org.uk). There is also peer learning through local networks and network meetings, workshops and events.

The Lincolnshire WLA network won the Adult Learners' Week (ALW) regional award in 2013, reflecting how the advocates contribute to the culture of learning at the workplace, including small and micro businesses, while Oxfordshire WLA Network has been selected as a Niace ALW Learning for Work Project Award winner for the South East in 2014.

SPP Pumps in Coleford, Forest of Dean is also celebrating after winning a national adult learning award sponsored by Niace at a recent Education Innovation Conference in Manchester. The Rum Story from Cumbria has also been awarded an ALW certificate of achievement and has seen real cost benefits from being involved with WLAs.

It is hoped that Niace will work with WLAs to achieve an umbrella national programme for ULRs, CLCs, WLAs as well as independent research and evaluation of the contribution of learning champions in different workplace and community settings.



STEWART SEGAL
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF EMPLOYMENT AND
LEARNING PROVIDERS (AELP)

Why we need a more coordinated look

It sounds obvious but more integration between employment and skills programmes and between different departments would boost basic skills training, says Stewart Segal.

Addressing a lack of basic skills can make a significant difference to the chances of an unemployed adult getting a job. This may seem obvious, but it is not universally accepted in policymaking circles.

Many AELP members who deliver government employment and skills programmes for the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS), the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), know this to be true. In fact, one of the most successful work programme contractors, Ingeus UK, maintain that clients benefiting from basic skills training to improve their English and maths are three times more likely to find employment.

Addressing a lack of basic skills can make a significant difference

Since the Department of Education and Employment was dissolved more than ten years ago, AELP has argued that more integration between employment and skills programmes would benefit those who are out of work. The lack of integration between the different departments' objectives means the programmes have not been as successful as they might have been.

The coalition government's main programme for supporting long-term unemployed people back into work, set up in 2010, the Work Programme, in theory allows the provider flexibility to choose the most appropriate mix of provision.

In practice, the programme's funding model leaves only limited scope for the provider to offer meaningful basic skills training. To get around this challenge, providers who also have access to Skills Funding Agency (SFA) money will often use it to improve basic skills.

The SFA has a flexible approach to the

adult skills budget because all providers can deliver support to the unemployed.

The funding can be used flexibly and to deliver short courses, including units of qualifications, to move people closer to the jobs market, and programmes can be developed linked closely to employers where the success rates in getting people jobs are high.

In the longer term, we should move towards programmes of learning where qualifications can be combined with other elements such as confidence-building and work experience. Work-related non-qualification activities should be funded as they are now in traineeships.

Despite this flexibility of delivery, there has been little opportunity for providers to grow their provision, even where the local job centres want more, and there has been no growth funding in-year to meet demand for high quality programmes for the unemployed. This should be prioritised in the adult skills budget.

The economic recovery will mean more jobs. But if we want new jobs to go to local people, then the case for closer working between local Jobcentre Plus (JCPs), local enterprise partnerships (Leps), City Deals and the SFA is clear.

We need more effective client referrals from JCPs to programmes such as traineeships and apprenticeships; this will mean a closer understanding of the local jobs market.

While AELP has concerns about the government's proposed apprenticeship reforms, the determination to keep apprenticeships for adults over 24, including those already working is encouraging.

Improving the skills of existing workforces is vital ingredient to sustain an economic recovery. An all-age, all-sector and all-level apprenticeship programme must remain the core offering for skills development.

That also means support for those not ready for an apprenticeship and those already in the workforce who need shorter programmes to develop their skills.

Like the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, AELP has just updated its manifesto for the post-2015 political landscape, calling for a more coherent approach across DfE, BIS and DWP with co-ordinated direction of what is currently fragmented procurement and inconsistent contract management. Sustainable employment has to be an overarching aim.

Adult learners' week

June 16-20, 2014

Events



Mon, June 16

Tues, June 17

Weds, June 18

Thurs, June 19

Fri, June 20

An opportunity to spark your interest, try something new, discover a talent you didn't know you had

Southend Adult Community College

For more information on events during Adult Learners' Week, visit www.alw.org.uk/events

Teddy Bears' picnic (numeracy)

Where: Yeading Children's Centre, Yeading Infant School

When: 11.30am — 1pm

More info: A family learning session for parents/carers and children aged two years and over, with activities to improve maths, problem solving, language and literacy. Bring your own teddy bear, packed lunch and a blanket to sit on. Phone Yeading Children's Centre on 0208 384 4164 to book

Traditional Indian Cooking

Where: Leeds City College, Enfield Centre

When: Noon to 12.30pm

More info: Enjoy a free creative session run by a current Leeds City College student. No need to book — just come along on the day

Potty potters throw a pot party

Where: The Cube, Tontine Street, Folkestone

When: 1.30pm — 3.30pm

More info: Learn how to throw your own pot on a potter's wheel as a taster session for Kent Adult Education's pottery and ceramic course. Tea and biscuits provided. To reserve a place at the free event phone 0845 606 5606

Internet Masterclass

Where: Abbey Wood Library, Eynsham Drive, Abbey Wood, London

When: 2pm — 3pm

More info: Learn the basics in computer use such as internet searches, keyboard functions, setting up an email account, using the internet safely and a lot more. Book in advance by phoning 020 8310 4185

Photoshop for beginners

Where: The Woolwich Centre Library, Love Lane, Woolwich

When: 9.30am — noon

More info: Would you like to learn the basics of Adobe Photoshop? Come along and find out how to edit pieces with different effects. Learn how to enhance ordinary pictures and create your own. Book in advance by phoning 020 8921 5750

Nifty after fifties exercise class

Where: The Dormston School, Mill Bank, Sedgley, West Midlands

When: 9.45am — 10.45am

More info: Come and have a go at the nifty free exercise class. No experience necessary. Phone Helen Richards on 01384 816389 to book

Creating captivating CVs using Microsoft Word

Where: Wiltshire Council, County Hall, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, Wiltshire

When: 10am — 11am

More info: Mini-workshop covering essential formatting tips and techniques to make your CV look as good as it can be. Book a place in advance by phoning Learning in Wiltshire on 01225 713183

German — try it out

Where: Passmore Edwards Centre, Market St, Newton Abbot

When: 6pm — 8pm

More info: Basic introduction to German. Book your place by phoning 0845 155 1014. Courses in a range of languages are available all over the country throughout the week so visit www.alw.org.uk to find one near you.

Introduction to motor vehicle maintenance

Where: Skills & Enterprise Centre, West Somerset College, Bircham Road, Somerset

When: 9am — 4pm

More info: Learn how to maintain your vehicle and carry out some basic repairs at home. The course covers general fault finding, basic maintenance of steering and replacing brake pads and common tools

Brickwork for beginners

Where: Guildford College, Stoke Road, Guildford, Surrey

When: 9.30am — 11.30am

More info: Make a start in bricklaying. Taster course costs £20. Book online at www.guildford.ac.uk and follow the links to Adult Learners Week or phone 01483 448585

Intro to floristry — create a funky buttonhole

Where: Brookfield Adult Learning Centre, Park Road, Uxbridge

When: 12.30pm — 1.30pm

More info: An insight into commercial floristry with an opportunity to make a selection of buttonholes. Learn how to handle tools and materials safely, use basic wiring techniques and arrange foliage and flowers. Phone 01895 254 766 to book

Mysterious courses

Where: Southend Adult Community College, Ambleside Drive, Southend

When: 1pm — 2.30pm

More info: A surprise course to spark your interest, try something new, discover a talent you didn't know you had, or just to have fun. The college is running a few of these so visit www.alw.org.uk for all times and locations. To enrol visit reception and quote the course code BS351Y14, visit www.southend-adult.ac.uk or phone 01702 44570

Introduction to functional skills maths

Where: The Woolwich Centre Library, 21 Love Lane, Woolwich

When: 11am — noon

More info: Taster session functional skills maths, with an introduction to numbers, fractions and decimals, measures, shapes and space and handling data. Phone 020 8921 5750 to book

Becoming a registered childminder

Where: Charville Children's Centre, Bury Avenue, Hayes

When: 12.45pm — 1.45pm

More info: An introduction a career as a childminder, with guidance on issues to think about, registering with Ofsted and what support is available. Phone Charville Children's Centre on 0208 841 3266 to book

Bollywood Dance

Where: Tamworth Library, Corporation Street, Tamworth

When: 1pm — 2pm

More info: Keep fit using Bollywood dance moves. Wear loose clothing and comfortable shoes. Phone the enrolment team at South Staffordshire College on 01827 304433 to book

Learn to play Scrabble

Where: Frome Library, Justice Lane, Somerset

When: 2pm — 4pm

More info: Top tips for beginners and improvers, with Frome Scrabble Club. Plus: competition - see what you can score over 5 moves. No need to book, just drop in

Save a life with East Midlands Ambulance Service

Where: The Victoria Shopping Centre in Nottingham, the Four Seasons Shopping Centre, in Mansfield, the Waterside Shopping Centre in Lincoln, and the Grosvenor Shopping Centre in Northampton

When: 9.30am — 4.30pm

More info: Watch or take part in CPR demonstrations. There will be information available on our First Aid Training Courses or how to become a Community First Responder. No need to book — just turn up on the day

Try sewing — sew it today, wear it tonight

Where: Folkestone Library, Grace Hill, Folkestone

When: 10am — noon

More info: In this easy session, use funky stitches to create a hand sewn brooch in just two hours. To reserve your place at this event phone 0845 606 5606

Electrics for beginners

Where: Guildford College, Stoke Road, Guildford

When: 10am — noon

More info: Learn all about wiring support systems and circuitry. To book, visit www.guildford.ac.uk and follow the links to Adult Learners Week or phone 01483 448585

Family history helpdesk

Where: Orford Park Library, Orford Jubilee Neighbourhood Hub, Jubilee Way, Warrington

When: 10am — midnight

More info: This drop-in taster session is open to anyone wanting to learn and explore the resources available to learn about their own family history

STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD

Adult education transforms lives and increases people's confidence. When learners are given real hands-on experience at the same time as learning the theory, they can develop into great things.

With the right help and the right attitude adult learners can achieve their ambitions.

With a focus on employability, preparation for apprenticeships, apprenticeships and skills qualifications, NOCN:

- help employers, LEPs, colleges, training providers and industrial partnerships to invest in narrowing the 'skills gap'
- provide flexible, high quality qualifications that individuals, employers and communities want and need
- qualifications are recognised and trusted by colleges, employers and training learning providers

We offer apprenticeships and vocational qualifications in health and social care, housing, child development, creative arts and design, construction, security, facilities management, horticulture, hospitality, manufacturing, sport & leisure services and engineering.

Call us on **0114 227 0500** or visit **www.nocn.org.uk** to find out more.
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