

And the Next Step?... Adult Learners' Week

There is no better time to improve your skills, learn something new and have some fun as thousands of free learning events across England become available to celebrate Adult Learners' Week between 14th and 20th May 2011.

Every May, NIACE – the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education – co-ordinates the learning initiative that continues to be the largest learning drive of its kind, being celebrated in over 55 countries world-wide. And the 20th Adult Learners' Week promises to be the biggest and best yet.

Next Step, the adult careers and skills service, sponsors Adult Learners' Week 2011 which promises to inspire thousands of adults to find out how learning can transform lives.

Next Step advisers are on hand during Adult Learners' Week to offer information and advice on learning, whether you're unsure about what you want to do or if you want to find out about one of the thousands of local events taking place. Advisers can also offer advice on longer term learning opportunities after Adult Learners' Week.

So there's no excuse for not taking part, as the booking facility is open NOW to book onto courses ranging from keep-fit to higher education level classes – all of which are free of charge – and taking place in workplaces, libraries, cafes, prisons, museums and colleges across the country, motivating adults of all ages and backgrounds to take up new activities.

Next Step Adviser James Wilmot said:

“Adult Learners' Week opens the door of opportunity for adults to try something new. Many of us ponder taking up learning but barriers of time, cost and convenience can stop it becoming a reality. What Adult Learners' Week does is give anyone interested in learning the flexibility to learn

somewhere convenient to them, with no cost barriers, in anticipation that it will lead them on to a more formal course of learning.”

To find out more about what opportunities there are near you, visit www.alw.org.uk/events where an Online Events Diary can be found. Free advice and information on local activity can also be accessed by calling 0800 100 900.

During Adult Learners' Week last year, an estimated 100,000 adults engaged in over 4,000 learning events. In a survey of participants, 57% of the people who took part in activity enrolled on, or applied for, a course as a result of getting involved, showing how small steps back into learning can make a life changing difference to the future of adults.

Adult Learners' Week also recognises the achievements of outstanding individuals and inspiring learning projects through [national and regional awards](#). This year there are 1643 nominees and there will be 84 award winners. Everyone nominated will receive a certificate of achievement. Winners will receive a learning voucher, valued between £200 and £1000, and will be invited to a ceremony during Adult Learners' Week.

James Wilmot concluded:

“Next Step, the adult careers and skills service, is delighted to support Adult Learners' Week with its important aim of encouraging adults to take part in learning activities. Following Adult Learners' Week, any adults interested in continuing their learning, looking to update their skills or just wanting to discuss the options available to them, Next Step offers free and impartial advice.”

Contact Next Step by calling 0800 100 900 from 8am to 10pm 7 days a week or searching online for Next Step.

ENDS

Notes for Editors

Next Step is available to all adults in England, aged 19 and over (or 18 and over if a Jobcentre Plus customer), whatever their qualification, skill level or employment status, fuelling the potential of millions of adults, through three integrated service channels:

- Online: direct.gov.uk/nextstep
- Telephone: 0800 100 900, 8am – 10pm, 7 days a week
- Face-to-face: Call 0800 100 900 to arrange an appointment in your area

The service is also available, over the telephone, with bi-lingual advisers in the following languages:

Punjabi	0800 093 1333*
Sylheti	0800 093 1444
Somali	0800 093 1555
Urdu	0800 093 1118*
Gujarati	0800 093 1119
Polish	0800 093 1114
French	0800 093 1115
Farsi	0800 093 1116

Lines are open Monday to Friday, between 9am – 5pm. *Urdu and Punjabi lines are open 9am – 8pm

Careers services in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are the responsibility of the Devolved Administrations.

Skills Funding Agency

The Skills Funding Agency, a partner organisation of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, funds and regulates adult further education and skills in England.

It is responsible for channelling funding swiftly, efficiently and securely to further education colleges and other providers, primarily in response to customer (employer and learner) choice on programmes. It operates through customer focused services: National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) and Next Step.

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This press release and others can be downloaded from the Next Step media room [here](#)